

## THAT DREADFUL SCHOOL

## WHAT THE STORY IS ABOUT

Here at last is the book for which A. S. Neill's myriad admirers have long waited—the story of his famous School, Summerhill. It is characteristic of Mr. Neill that he should choose as the title of this book the name by which Summerhill is most commonly known in the camps of the diehards—"That Dreadful School."

What he has to say he says in a sincere and forthright manner; he does not attempt to put only the rosy apples on the top of the barrel, but tells openly of the work and play, and even the bad language, of children freed from the restraints of moralists and Mrs. Grundies. The experience of 16 years has convinced Neill of one thing, that Summerhill is the School of the future.

This is by far the most important book A. S. Neill has written, and if it makes many people want to visit the School, it will make all those who now call it "That Dreadful School" call it something very much stronger.

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A. S. NEILL

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# THAT DREADFUL SCHOOL

BY

A. S. NEILL



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## THAT DREADFUL SCHOOL

# THAT DREADFUL SCHOOL

## CHAPTER I

### HISTORICAL

THIS is the story of a modern school . . . Summerhill, a school that is fairly well known and one that is pretty widely talked about. Every now and then I hear wonderful stories about it. The latest is that I had a child of seven whose main interest in life was water-closets. I decided to cure this child by drastic means, so I shut him up alone in a W.C. for twelve hours, during all of which he screamed and . . . was of course cured for ever. Then there are tales of myself—that I am a drunkard, a homosexual, a Communist, a red-haired rude Scot. Again there are tales of Summerhill's being a home for imbeciles . . . not long ago an enquiring parent asked me if I took only imbeciles: I replied: "No, only the children of imbecilic parents."

Less fatuous stories tell of a school where children break windows all day long, and the

other day I shocked a visitor by pointing to our fine greenhouse and saying: "In nine years only six of these panes have been broken." Newspaper reports call it a Go-as-you-please School, and imply that it is a gathering of wild primitives who know no law and have no manners.

It seems necessary, therefore, for me to write the story of the school as honestly as I can. That I write with a bias is natural, yet I shall try to show its demerits as well as its merits. And possibly I shall find that its demerits are only my own inner limitations transferred to my work. Its merits will be the merits of healthy, free children whose lives are unspoiled by fear and hate.

Summerhill began as an experimental school. (It is no longer such: it is now a demonstration school, for it demonstrates that freedom works and succeeds.) When my wife and I began it we had one main idea . . . to make the school fit the child instead of making the child fit the school.) I had taught in ordinary schools for many years, and knew the other way well, knew that it was all wrong. (It was wrong because it was based on an adult conception of what a child should be and what he should learn.) It dated—and dates—from the days when psychology was an unknown science. Obviously

a school that makes active children sit at desks studying mostly useless subjects is a bad school when we consider the psychology of the child. It is a good school if we agree that it is desirable to have a population of docile, uncreative citizens who will fit into a civilisation whose standard of success is riches and whose average of living is wage-slavery. The trouble is that while one stage of civilisation passes, child nature continues. Our idea in founding the school was to find out what this child nature was.

There were—there are difficulties. We could only study children from the upper and middle classes, because our whole scheme depended on our being able to make ends meet. We had no rich man behind us to take all financial worry away from us. In the early days of the school a rich Colonial, who insisted on anonymity, helped us through one or two bad times, and later one of the parents made us generous presents—a new kitchen, a super radiogram, a new wing on our cottage, and to-day he is building us a new workshop. This was James Shand, of Liverpool, a fellow Scot, a man of genius in organising, and a true believer in freedom for children. He has been the ideal benefactor, for he made no conditions and asked for nothing in return. "Summerhill

gave my Jimmy the education I wanted for him," he said simply.

But even with his help we have never been able to take the children of the very poor. That is a pity, for even from the viewpoint of child study, we have had to study the children of the bourgeoisie only. And it has to be said that sometimes it is difficult to see child nature when it is hidden behind too much money and too expensive clothes. When a girl knows that on her twenty-first birthday she will come into £500 a year it is not easy to study child nature in her. Luckily, however, most of the present and past pupils of Summerhill have not been spoiled by wealth: most of them know that they must earn a living when they leave school.

One drawback about the children of the middle-class is that they too often are given too much money. I have more than once felt annoyed when lads of seventeen were given motor-cycles or even cars, annoyed because in my own youth I had to struggle hard to get anything I wanted. At our general meetings in school I have more than once advocated the pooling of all pocket-money, saying that it is manifestly unfair that one boy should get a pound a week while others get sixpence. In spite of the fact that the pupils with the big

incomes are always in a very small minority I have never had my proposals carried by general vote. Children with fivepence a week will defend hotly any proposal to limit the income of their richer neighbours. And when one gets up and points out that Neill has a car while none of the staff can afford a car I know that I must be a bit of a humbug. Children have a very strong sense of justice, a fact that will be shown more fully when I describe their methods of dealing with social offenders.

It is the family life of the middle-class that makes study of the children difficult. In our school we have maids from the town who sleep at their homes. They are young girls who work hard and well. In a free atmosphere where they are not bossed they work harder and better than maids do who are under authority. They are excellent girls in every way. I have always felt ashamed of the fact that these girls have to work hard because they were born poor, whereas I have had spoilt girls from well-to-do homes who had not the energy to make their own beds. But here again I must confess to being a humbug, for at present there is a school law—like all school laws made by general vote—that everyone must make his or her own bed . . . and I dodge the law myself. My lame excuse that

I have so much else to do does not impress the children. They jeer at my defence that you can't expect a general to pick up the fag ends in the lines.

I must explain that children who come to school early—say, at three or even eight, never show bourgeois tendencies: it is the spoilt child of fourteen from the conventional school that is the trouble.

Well, we set out to make a school in which we should allow children freedom to be themselves. In order to do this we had to renounce all discipline, all direction, all suggestion, all moral training, all religious instruction. We have been called brave, but it did not require courage: all it required was what we had—a complete belief in the child as a good not an evil being. And during sixteen years this belief in the goodness of the child has never wavered; rather has it become a final faith.

The chronological history of the school I need not give. That was given in *The Problem Child* and *The Problem Parent*, and incidentally I remark that the titles of those books have given many a false impression of the school. At one time many of the children were problems—thieves, truants, etc. That came about because we were practically the only school that would deal with such cases. But gradually we began to have normal children, so that to-day among our seventy pupils the proportion of problems

is, I should guess, the same as obtains in Eton or Roedean. Within the last three weeks I have refused the offer of two Public School lads expelled for stealing. My motive was selfish: I have done my bit in curing delinquents, and I am willing for someone else to take the job on. Dealing with young crooks is a long, exhausting business, and in the end almost a boring business, for one crook is almost the same as another, and after a few years of dealing with them one realises that the joy of discovery has largely gone.

To-day Summerhill pupils are mostly children whose parents want them to be brought up without restricting discipline from above. That is a most happy circumstance, for in the old days I would have the son of a fire-eating diehard, who sent his lad to me in desperation. Such parents had no interest in freedom for children at all, and secretly must have considered us a crowd of lunatic cranks. It was so very difficult to explain things to those diehards.

I recall the military gentleman who thought of enrolling his nine year old son as a pupil.

"The place seems all right," he said, "but I have one fear . . . my boy may learn to masturbate here."

I asked him why he feared.

"It will do him so much harm?" he said.

"It didn't do you or me much harm, did it?" I said pleasantly.

He went off rather hurriedly with his son.

Then there was the rich mother who, after asking me questions for an hour, turned to her husband and said, "I can't decide whether to send Marjorie here or not."

"Don't bother," I said. "I have decided for you. I'm not taking her."

I had to explain to her what I meant.

"You don't really believe in freedom," I said. "If Marjorie came here I should waste half my life explaining to you what it was all about, and in the end you wouldn't be convinced. The result would be disastrous for Marjorie, for she would be perpetually faced with the awful doubt—which is right, home or school?"

The ideal parents are those who come down and say: "Summerhill is the place for our kids: no other school will do." No other school will do because we have gone farther than any other school in freedom (with the possible exception of Dora Russell's school).

It is necessary even at this late date to explain what is meant by freedom for the child. The usual argument against freedom for children is of this kind:—Life is hard, and we must train the children so that they will fit into life

later on. We must therefore discipline them. If we allow them to do what they like how will they ever be able to serve under a boss? How will they compete with others who have known discipline? I shall leave the answer till later: perhaps the book will be a sufficient answer.

Freedom is necessary for the child because only under freedom can he grow in his natural way. I see the results of bondage in new pupils coming from prep. schools and convents. They are bundles of insincerity, with an unreal politeness and pseudo manners. Their reaction to freedom is rapid and tiresome. For the first week or two they open doors for the staff, call me "Sir," wash carefully. They glance at me with "respect" which is easily recognised as fear. After a few weeks of freedom they show what they are. They become impudent, unmannerly, unwashed. They do all the things they have been forbidden to do in the past: they swear and smoke and break things. And all the time they have an insincere expression in their eyes and in their voices. It takes at least six months for them to lose their insincerity. They lose also their deference to what they think is authority, and in six months they are natural, healthy kids who say what they think without cheek or hate.

When a child comes young enough to freedom he does not go through the stage of insincerity and acting. The most striking thing about Summerhill is this absolute sincerity among the pupils . . . but I grant that it has its awkward moments, as when recently a girl of three looked at a bearded visitor and said, "I don't think I like your face." The visitor rose to the occasion.

"But I like yours," he said, and Mary smiled.

No, I won't argue for freedom for children. One half hour with a free child is more convincing than a book of arguments. Seeing is believing. Yet it is necessary to point out the difference between freedom and licence. The other day I sat with Ethel Mannin in Covent Garden. During the first ballet a child in front of us talked loudly to her father. At the end of the ballet Ethel and I found other seats. Said Ethel to me: "What would you do if one of your kids from Summerhill did that?"

"Tell it to shut up," I said.

"You wouldn't need to," said Ethel; "they wouldn't do it."

And I don't think they would. I forget whether in any previous book I told of the woman who brought her girl of seven to see me.

"Mr. Neill," she said, "I have read every line you have written, and even before Daphne

was born I had decided to bring her up exactly on your lines."

I glanced at Daphne who was standing on my grand piano with her heavy shoes on. She made a leap for the sofa and nearly went through the springs.

"You see how natural she is," said the mother, "the Neillian child."

I fear that I blushed.

It is the distinction between freedom and licence that many parents cannot grasp. (In the disciplined home the children have no rights, and in the spoiled home they have all the rights. The proper home is one in which children and adults have equal rights.) And the same applies to the school. In Summerhill everyone has equal rights. No one is allowed to walk on my grand piano, and I am not allowed to borrow a boy's cycle without his permission. At a general meeting the vote of a child of six counts for as much as my vote does.)

But, says the knowing one, in practice of course the voices of the grown-ups count. Doesn't the child of six wait to see how you vote before he raises his hand? I wish he sometimes would, for many of my proposals are lost. Free children are not easily influenced. The absence of fear accounts for this phenome-

non, and the absence of fear is the finest thing that can happen to a child's life. They do not fear our staff. One of the school rules is that after ten o'clock at night there shall be quietness on the upper corridor. One night about eleven a pillow fight was going on, and I left my desk where I was writing to protest against the row. As I got upstairs there was a scurrying of feet and the corridor was empty and quiet.

Suddenly I heard a disappointed voice say: "Humph, it's only Neill," and the fun at once began again. When I explained that I was trying to write a book downstairs they at once agreed to chuck the noise. Their scurrying came from the suspicion that their bedtime officer (one of their own age) was on their track.

I emphasise the importance of this absence of fear of adults. A child of nine will come and tell me he has broken a window with a ball. There was a time not so long ago when the government resigned, and no one would stand for election. I seized the opportunity of putting up a notice . . . In the absence of a government I herewith declare myself Dictator. *Heil Neill!* Soon there were mutterings, and in the afternoon Vivien, aged six, came to me and said: "Neill, I've broken a window in the gym."

I waved him away.

"Don't bother me with little things like that," I said, and he went.

A little later he came back and said he had broken two windows. By this time I was curious and asked him what the great idea was.

"I don't like Dictators," he said, "and I don't like going without my grub." (I discovered later that the opposition to dictatorship had tried to take it out of the cook, who promptly shut up the kitchen and went home.)

"Well," I asked, "what are you going to do about it?"

"Break more windows," he said doggedly.

"Carry on," I said . . . and he carried on. When he returned he announced that he had broken seventeen windows.

"But mind," he said earnestly, "I'm going to pay for them."

"How?"

"Out of my pocket money. How long will it take me?"

I did a rapid calculation.

"About ten years," I said.

He looked glum for a minute, then I saw his face light up.

"Gee," he cried, "I don't have to pay for them at all."

"But what about the Private Property rule?"

I asked. "The windows are my private property."

"I know that, but there isn't any Private Property Rule now. There isn't any government and the government makes the rules."

It may have been my expression that made him add: "But all the same I'll pay for them." But he didn't have to pay for them. In lecturing in London shortly afterwards I told the story, and at the end of my talk a young man came up and handed me a pound note "to pay for the young devil's windows." That is two years ago, but even now Vivien tells people of his windows and of the man who paid for them . . . "He must have been a terrible fool, because he never even saw me."

Most lying on the part of children is prompted by fear, and when fear is absent lying diminishes. I do not say it disappears entirely. A boy will tell you he has broken a window but he will not tell you he has raided the larder or pinched his neighbour's cycle valve. The complete absence of lying would be too much to hope for. I am a pretty good liar myself on occasion, and so are you, reader. I am writing this book on a ship on my way to lecture in South Africa, and I fear I have used—or rather abused this trip generously these last few weeks . . . "Dear Sir, I regret that I cannot answer your letter in full because I am sailing for South Africa

to-morrow," and what a great opportunity when I return! . . . "Dear Sir, I cannot trace your letter. It must have gone astray when I was in South Africa."

Freedom will not do away with the phantasy lie in children. Too often parents make a mountain out of this agreeable moleheap. When little Jimmy came to me saying that his Daddy had sent him a real Rolls Bentley I said to him: "I know. I saw it at the front door. Topping car."

"Go on," he said, "I was only kidding."

Now it may seem paradoxical and illogical, but I make a distinction between lying and being dishonest. You can be honest and yet a liar, that is, you can be honest about the big things in life although sometimes dishonest about the lesser things. Thus many of our lies are meant to save others pain. Truth-telling would become an evil if it impelled me to write: "Dear Sir, your letter was so long and dull that I could not be bothered reading it all," or if it forced your to say: "Thank you for playing, but you murdered that Etude." Adult lying is altruistic (not always), but child lying is always local and personal. The best way to make a child a liar for life is to teach it to speak the truth and nothing but the truth.

(Speaking a lie is a minor frailty. Living a lie

is a major calamity. The children brought up under discipline live one long life lie. They never dare be themselves. They become slaves to established futile customs and manners, and they accept without question their silly little silk hats and Eton jackets, their "crocodiles" and their black stockings and straw hats. The Old School Tie symbolises all that discipline stands for. The headmaster of a large boys' school said to me not long ago when I asked him what sort of boys he had: "The sort that goes out with neither ideals nor ideas. They would join up as cannon fodder in any war, never stopping to consider what the war was about and why they were fighting." That hints at the benefits of discipline to the ruling classes, doesn't it?

This business of being sincere in life and to life is a vital one. It is the most vital one in the world really. If you have sincerity all other things will be added to you. Everyone realises the value of sincerity in—say—acting. We delight in Garbo because she is so obviously sincere, and it is the sincerity of Mae West that makes her a personality. We expect sincerity from our politicians (such is the optimism of mankind), from our judges and magistrates, teachers and doctors. And we educate our children in such a way that they dare not be sincere.

Possibly the greatest discovery we have made in Summerhill is that a child is born a sincere creature. We set out to leave children alone so that we might discover what they were. It is the only possible way of dealing with children, and the pioneer school of the future must pursue this way if it is to contribute to child knowledge and, more important, to child happiness. The aim of life is happiness. The evil of life is all that limits or destroys happiness. Happiness means goodness always: unhappiness at its limits means Jew-beating or Communist-torture or national war. Summerhill is possibly the happiest school in the world. We have no truants and seldom a case of homesickness (but for homesickness see page 41). We have no fights—quarrels, of course, but seldom have I seen a stand up fight like the ones we used to have as boys. I seldom hear a child cry, and that is because children when free have much less hate to express than children who are down-trodden. Hate breeds hate, and love breeds love. Love means being on the side of approving, and that is essential in any school. You can't be "on the side of" if you punish and storm and rage. Summerhill is a school in which the child knows that he is approved of. Mind you, I make no claim that we are above and

beyond human foibles. I spent weeks planting potatoes in Spring, and when I found eight plants pulled up in June I made a big fuss. Yet there was a difference between my fuss and that of an authoritarian. My fuss was about potatoes, but the fuss a disciplinarian would make would drag in the question of morality—right and wrong. I did not say that it was wrong to steal my spuds; I did not make it a matter of good and evil . . . I made it a matter of spuds. They were my spuds and they should have been left alone. I doubt if I am making the distinction clear. Let me put it in another way. To the children I am no authority to be feared. I am their equal, and the row I kick up about my spuds has no more significance to them than the row a boy may kick up about his punctured bicycle. It is quite safe to have a row with a child . . . when you are equals. Now some will say: "That's all bunk. There can't be equality. Neill is the boss; he is bigger and wiser." That is indeed true. I am the boss, and if the house went on fire the children would run to me. They know that I am bigger and wiser (am I?), but that does not matter when I meet them on their own ground . . . the potato patch, so to speak. When Billy, aged five, told me to get out of his birthday party because

I hadn't been invited, I went at once without hesitation, just as Billy gets out of my room when I don't want his company. It is not easy to describe this relationship between teacher and child, but every visitor to Summerhill will know what I mean when I say that the relationship is ideal. One sees it in the attitude to the staff in general. Corkhill the Chemistry man is "Corks" or "George." Other members of the staff are known as May and Cyril and Lucy and Ruth. Strangely enough the only person they have kept a title for is my wife, who is "Mrs. Lins" (Lindesay-Neill). I am "Neill," and the cook is "Maisie."

Visitors tell me that they find the children unusually friendly. They may be just as friendly at other schools, yet I recall the time when I was Joint Editor (with Beatrice Ensor) of *The New Era* round about 1919. Part of my work was to visit progressive schools, and I remember the difficulty I had in making contact with the children. They were standoffish . . . rather like the people on this ship who are just beginning to thaw on the seventh day out. The only children who accepted me at once were the boys in Norman MacMunn's school then at Tiptree Hall. That may have been because Norman did all his teaching with a cigarette in his mouth. To-day Summerhill is possibly

the only school in Britain where the teachers can smoke while they teach.

Children make contact with strangers more easily when fear is unknown to them. English reserve is at bottom fear, and that is why the most reserved are those who have the most wealth. If I had travelled Third on this ship I should have found the people much more friendly, but as a bad sailor I chose First, and as a good Scot I chose First . . . paid by the Transvaal Teachers' Association. If you really want to know the difference between the reserve due to class and the unreserve due to having no class, visit Harrow one day and an L.C.C. East End school the next. The fact that Summerhill children are as friendly as East Ham children is a source of pride to me and my staff.

It must be confessed, however, that many of our visitors are people of interest to the children. The kind of visitor most unwelcome to them is the teacher, especially the earnest teacher, who wants to see their drawing and written work. The most welcome visitor is he or she who has good tales to tell—of adventure and travel or, best of all, of aviation. A boxer or a good tennis player is surrounded at once, but visitors of theory, be it Communism or Oxford Groupism are left severely alone.

It is worth mentioning that a free education does not produce Communists and rebels generally. It may be due to the class of the pupils . . . they have never had to experience slavery or poverty . . . but more likely is it due to child nature itself. Childhood is playhood, and the play period lives longer than is generally supposed. In a new civilisation in which profit-making does not compel the young to be early slaves, I make the guess that playhood will last until the age of twenty. Interest in politics is an adult interest, It comes to this that children live for the day. To-morrow is too far away to be of importance to them. That is why time is long in childhood. When you are ten, a year is a long long time, but when you are fifty the years pass at an alarming speed.

This playhood business has worried me a lot. I find it impossible to get youths of seventeen to help me plant potatoes or weed onions. They will spend hours decoking motor engines or washing cars or making radio sets, but anything to do with weeding or shovelling sand is far away from their interest. It took me a long time to accept this phenomenon . . . "The lazy louts . . . when I was their age, etc . . ." The truth began to dawn on me when one day I was digging my brother's

garden in Scotland. I didn't enjoy the job, and it came to me suddenly that what was wrong was that I was digging a garden that meant nothing to me. And my garden means nothing to boys, whereas their motor bikes mean a lot. True altruism is a long time in coming, and it never loses its factor of selfishness.

Small children have quite a different attitude to work. Summerhill juniors, from three to eight, will work like Trojans mixing cement or carting sand or cleaning bricks, and work with no thought of reward. They identify themselves with grown-ups and their work is a play phantasy worked out in reality. From the age of eight or nine until nineteen or twenty the desire to do manual labour of a dull kind seems to be wanting. I speak of the masses: individuals remain workers right through this fallow period.

Small children live a life of phantasy, but they carry it over into action. The phantasy life persists in adolescence, but action is less common. Boys of eight to fourteen certainly carry their phantasies into action, for if they aren't playing gangsters and bumping people off they are flying all the skies in their wooden aeroplanes. From fourteen onwards the fallow period is most apparent, both in boys and girls. Small girls go through a gangster stage also,

but it does not take the form of guns and swords. It is more personal. Mary's gang objects to Nellie's gang, and there are rows and hard words. Boys' rival gangs are play enemies, while girls' rival gangs are more apt to be real enemies. This makes small boys more easy to live with than small girls. The boys are primarily interested in things, the girls in people. On a good day you may not see the boy gangsters of Summerhill. They are in far corners intent on their deeds of derring do. But you will see the girls. They are in or near the house, and never far away from the grown-ups. But you will often find the art room full of girls painting and making bright things with fabrics. In the main I think that the small boys are more creative, at least I never hear a boy say he is bored because he doesn't know what to do, whereas I sometimes hear girls say it.

I possibly find the boys more creative than the girls because the school may be better equipped for boys than for girls. Girls of ten and over have little use for a workshop with iron and wood: they have no desire to tinker with motor-cycle engines, nor are they attracted by electricity or radio. They have their art work, which includes pottery, linoleum cutting, painting, sewing work, but that is not

enough. They need a better cooking outfit than they have (although boys are just as keen on cooking as girls are). The girls need . . . now, really, what do they need? As a mere man I don't know. I see them writing and producing their own plays, making their own dresses and scenery . . . a recent dance produced by Edna and Virginia, aged fourteen, was fit for a West End show. Branwyn, aged nine, produces excellent ballets, and the acting talent of the girls is of a high standard. The girls appear to frequent the chemical lab. just as often as the boys do, and when I come to think of it, the workshop is about the only department that does not attract girls from nine upwards. The girls take a less active part in school meetings than the boys do, and I have no ready explanation to give for this fact. A girl is usually more sensitive than a boy. She is easily squashed by ridicule or sarcasm. Girls are just as keen on general meetings as boys are, but, as I say, they take a less active part. The inferiority complex takes a different form in boys and girls. The girl retires behind her inferiority, while the boy overcompensates for his inferiority by making a brave show of not caring. Thus at a meeting, when Jean is howled at she is likely to retire into her shell, whereas

Dave will shout louder than his opponents, and in the end surmount his defeat. Humour comes into it. Girls have as much sense of humour as boys, but they seldom use humour to protect themselves as boys do. Some boys defend themselves in this way with success. I have seen Dave being tried for some anti-social act, but by giving his evidence in a hilarious way, he gets the appreciation of the mob, and succeeds in getting only a minor punishment. A girl never does this: she is ever too ready to see herself in the wrong. Even in the most enlightened homes the girls suffer from the general inferiority that our society forces on womanhood. In a capitalist world women are possessions, and the fact that most married women are economically dependent on their husbands must make all women feel inferior. The girls from Summerhill will, most of them, have jobs which they will carry on after marriage, so that their inferiority is not a personal one so much as a general one.

The usual criticism of co-education is that boys and girls have different capacities for learning. This criticism does not apply to Summerhill where learning is not a fetish, where indeed learning is optional. This subject of learning is important enough to have a new chapter for itself.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LEARNING SIDE

LESSONS in Summerhill are optional. Children can go to them or stay away from them—for years if they want to. There is a time-table for the staff, and the children have classes according to their age usually, but sometimes according to their interests. Personally I do not know what type of teaching is carried on, for I never visit lessons, and have no interest in how children learn. We have no new methods of teaching because we do not consider that teaching very much matters. Whether a school has an apparatus for teaching Long Division or not is of no significance, for Long Division is of no importance whatever.

Children who come as infants attend lessons all the way, but pupils from other schools vow that they will never attend any beastly lessons again. They play and cycle and get in people's way, but they fight shy of any lessons. This sometimes goes on for months, and the recovery time is proportionate to the hatred their last school gave them. Our record case was a girl

from a convent. She loafed for three years. The average period of recovery from lesson-aversion is three months.

Strangers to the idea of freedom in the school will be wondering what sort of a madhouse it is where teachers smoke while they teach and children play all day if they want to. Many an adult says: "If I had been sent to a school like that I'd never have done a thing." Others say: "Such children will feel themselves heavily handicapped when they have to compete against children who have been made to learn." I think of Jack who left us at the age of seventeen to go into an engineering factory. One day the managing director sent for him.

"You are the lad from Summerhill," he said. "I'm curious to know how such an education appears to you now that you are mixing with lads from the old schools. Suppose you had to choose again, would you go to Eton or Summerhill?"

"Oh, Summerhill, of course," replied Jack.

"But why? What does it offer that the Public Schools don't offer?"

Jack scratched his head.

"I dunno," he said slowly; "I think it gives you a feeling of complete self-confidence."

"Yes," said the manager dryly, "I noticed it when you came into the room."

"Lord," laughed Jack; "I'm sorry if I gave you that impression."

"I liked it," said the director. "Most men when I call them into the office fidget about and look uncomfortable. You came in as my equal . . . by the way what department would you like to change into?"

This story shows that learning does not matter, that only character matters. Jack failed in his Matric. because he hated all book learning, but his lack of knowledge about Lamb's *Essays* or the Trigonometrical Solution of Triangles is not going to handicap him in life.

All the same there is a lot of learning in Summerhill. I don't suppose a group of our twelve year olds could compete with a State school class of equal age in—say—neat handwriting or spelling or vulgar fractions. But in an examination requiring originality our lot would beat the others hollow. We have no class examinations in the school, but sometimes I set an exam. for fun. In my last paper appeared the following questions:—

Where are the following:—Madrid, Thursday Island, yesterday, God, love, my pocket screwdriver (but, alas, there was no helpful answer to this one), democracy, hate, etc.

Give meanings for the following: the number shows how many are expected for each:—  
Hand (3) . . . only two got the third right—the standard of measure for a horse.  
Bore (3) . . . club bore, oil well bore, river bore. Shell (3) . . . seaside, “That was Shell that was,” undertaker’s word for coffin.  
Brass (4) . . . metal, cheek, money, department of an orchestra. . . . “The stuff that Neill is stingy with in his workshop” was allowed double marks as metal and cheek.  
Translate Hamlet’s To be or Not to be speech into Summerhillese.

These questions are obviously not intended to be serious, and the children enjoy them thoroughly. New-comers, on the whole, do not rise to the answering standard of pupils who have become acclimatised to the school, not that they have less brain power, rather because they have become so accustomed to work in a serious groove that any light touch puzzles them.

This is the play side of our teaching. In all classes much work is done, and if for some reasons or another a teacher cannot take his or her class on the appointed day there is usually trouble. David, aged nine, had to be isolated the other day for whooping cough. He cried bitterly.

"I'll miss Roger's lesson in Geography," he protested furiously. David has been in the school practically from birth, and he has definite and final ideas about the necessity of having his lessons given to him. A few years ago someone at a meeting proposed that a culprit should be punished by being banished from lessons for a week. The others protested on the ground that the punishment was too severe.

My staff and I have a hearty hatred of all examinations, and to us the Matric. is anathema. But we cannot refuse to teach children their Matric. subjects. Obviously as long as the thing is in existence it is our master. Hence Summerhill staff is always qualified to teach to the Matric. standard. Not that many children want to take Matric.; only those going to the university do so. I do not think they find it specially hard to tackle this exam. They generally begin to work for it seriously at the age of fourteen, and they do the work in about three years. I don't claim that they always pass at first go. The more important fact is that they try again.

Boys who are going in for engineering do not bother to take Matric. They go straight to training centres of the Faraday House type. They have a tendency to see the world before

they settle down to business or university work. Of our old boys three are in Kenya, two of them coffee-farming; one boy is in Australia, and one in British Guiana. The story of Derrick Boyd may become typical of the adventurous spirit that a free education encourages. He came at the age of eight and left after passing his Matric. at eighteen. He wanted to be a doctor, but his father could not at the time afford to send him to the university. Derrick thought that he would fill in the waiting time by seeing the world. He went to London Docks and spent two days trying to get any job—even as a stoker. He was told that too many real sailors were unemployed, and he went home sadly. Soon a fellow-schoolmate (of Summerhill) told him of an English lady in Spain who wanted a chauffeur. Derrick seized the chance, went out to Spain, built the lady a house or enlarged her existing house, drove her all over Europe, and then went to the university. The lady decided to help him with his university fees and living. After two years the lady asked him to take a year off to motor her to Kenya and there build her a house. He is there now, and the latest news is that he is to finish his medical studies in Capetown.

Larry, who came to us about the age of

twelve, passed Matric. at sixteen and went out to Tahiti to grow fruit. Finding this an unpaying spec. he took to driving a taxi. Later he passed on to New Zealand, where I understand he did all sorts of jobs, including driving another taxi. He passed on to Brisbane University, and three weeks ago I had a visit from the Principal of that university, who gave an admiring account of Larry's doings.

"When we had a vacation and the students went home," he said, "Larry went out to work as a labourer on a sawmill."

But I promised to be as honest as I could, and I must confess that there are Old Boys who have not shown enterprise. For obvious reasons I cannot describe them, but our successes are always those whose homes are good. Derrick and Jack and Larry had parents who were completely in sympathy with the school, so that the boys never had that most tiresome of conflicts, the thought: Which is right, home or school? And looking at the children we have to-day I am convinced that the successes will be those whose parents are in agreement with us . . . when the child comes young enough.

Home and school must be a unity. Mental conflict will handicap a child for life. I think of one unsuccess, a boy whose parents were

religious and moral. At school that boy could never settle the doubt about school v. home, and he went out to face life with this doubt held ready to attach to every decision in life. The boy may have had natural ability, but he never showed it, he was so much inhibited. Other comparative failures have been children who have been pushed on by their parents. In such cases the child becomes resentful, and unconsciously is determined that his parents will not win.

I suddenly see a brilliant opportunity for critics. Ah, this man claims the success for his school when they succeed, and when they are duds he blames the parents! It is not quite true, for as I have said the success is the product of home and school combined. What is true is that only the child without fears and conflict will meet life in the spirit of adventure, and if a home gives fears and conflicts it is a bad home.

In connection with the bad home I shall digress a little on to the question of homesickness. Homesickness is always the sign of a bad home, a home in which there is a lot of hate. The homesick child longs, not for the love of home; but for the strife of home, and for the protection of home. That sounds paradoxical, but it isn't when we reflect that the more unhappy the

home is the more the child seeks protection. He has no anchor in life, and he exaggerates the anchorage he calls home. Absent from it he idealises it and longs, not for the home he knows, but for the home it has been to him in his wishes.

To return to learning, parents are slow in realising how unimportant the learning side of school is. Children, like adults, learn what they want to learn in life, but all the prize-giving and marks and exams. sidetrack the personality. Only pedants can claim that learning from books is education. Books are the least important apparatus in a school. All that any child needs is the Three R's: the rest should be tools and clay and sports and theatres and paints . . . and freedom.

The question arises: Do girls really flourish under a system of freedom as easily as boys do? Do the girls show desires to see the world as stokers or taxi-drivers? So far we have had only two girls who came as infants and left as true products of Summerhill. One is a B.A. (Psychology) and the other is a chemist. Whether it be that life holds less adventure for women than for men, our girls on the whole do not go off on wild schemes. We are still at a stage when life holds more for men than for women. The economic market for women is not a wide one.

Dull jobs there are, of course, jobs in offices and shops. Economic necessity may send our girls into dull jobs, but they are more likely to go in for the stage or art or medicine. At the moment two old girls are at art schools in London, but today there is no living in art except the commercial kind—advertising and general poster work. I know of men well known in the poster world, who cannot live by their art.

Summerhill has had comparatively few girls who made, as it were, the whole course. This is not easy to account for. Up to a few years ago girls were apt to come late to school: we had lots of failures from convents and girls' schools, and we have never accepted a child who came late as a true example of a free education. These girls who came late were usually children of parents who had no appreciation of freedom (if they had had their girls would not have been problems), and when the girl was cured of her special failing she was whisked off to "a nice school where she will be educated." But for the past six or seven years we have been getting girls from homes which believed in Summerhill, and a fine bunch they are too, full of beans and originality and initiative.

We have lost girls occasionally for financial reasons, sometimes when their brothers were

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kept on at expensive schools. The old tradition of making the sons the important ones in the family dies hard. We have also lost both girls and boys through the possessive jealousy of the parents, who fear that the children should give their home love to their school.

But this chapter is one on learning. I have drifted away from the subject because it means so little to me. The most hopeful thing about the parents now is that they never ask me what Johnnie is learning. They do not have to ask how Johnnie is. They see . . . and hear.

## CHAPTER III

### SELF-GOVERNMENT

WHEN we founded the school we resolved to have no government from above, and self-government was, as it were, forced on the children. Much has been said and written about the iniquity of "forcing" self-government on children. Some time ago at a meeting of progressive school teachers in London the theme was self-government. Two teachers from progressive schools got up and each told the same tale—that they had given their children self-government, and in three weeks the children came and beseeched them to bring back the old way of benevolent adult authority. Currie of Dartington Hall sat by me.

"For God's sake, Neill," he said impatiently, "get up and tell them what self-government is. You are the only man in the room who has had it for years."

I declined.

"What's the good?" I said wearily. "They don't want to believe that self-government can succeed."

The school that has no self-government should not be called a progressive school at all. It is

a compromise school. You cannot have progression unless children feel completely free to govern their own social life. When there is a boss, freedom is not there, and this applies more to the benevolent boss than to the disciplinarian. The child of spirit can rebel against the hard boss, but the soft boss merely makes him impotently soft himself.

Is it worth while giving the arguments for self-government? I wonder if it is. All that it is necessary to say is that one weekly general meeting is, in my opinion, of more value than a week's curriculum of school subjects. The educational value of practical civics cannot be over-emphasised. The child realises the value of self-government and in Summerhill the pupils would fight to the death for their right to govern themselves.

Our system of self-government has gone through various phases and changes. When we had six pupils it was a kind of family affair. If Derrick punched Inge she would call a meeting and we would all sit round and give our opinions. We had no jury system; the verdict and sentence were given by show of hands. As the school grew bigger this family method gradually changed, and the first change was the election of a chairman. Following that came trial by jury, a jury elected on the spot

by the chairman. The culprit had the right of challenging any member of the jury, but this seldom happened: only occasionally would one hear the protest: "I won't have Bill on the jury, for he's a pal of Pat's (Pat being the plaintiff who got punched)."

During the last year or two we have had another form of government. At the beginning of each term a government of five is elected by vote. This sort of cabinet deals with all cases of charges and acts as a jury, giving punishment. The cases are read out at the general Saturday night meeting, and the verdicts are announced. Here is a typical example of such a procedure:

Jim has taken the pedals from Jack's cycle because his own cycle is a dud and he wants to go away with some others for a week-end hike. The government after due consideration of the evidence announces that Jim has to replace the pedals and be forbidden to go on the hike. The chairman says: "Any objections?"

Jim gets up and shouts that there jolly well are (only his adjective isn't exactly "jolly").

"This isn't fair," he cries. "I didn't know that Jack ever used his old crock of a grid; it has been kicking about among the bushes for days. I don't mind shoving his pedals back but I think the punishment unfair. I don't want to have the hike cut out."

Follows a breezy discussion. In this it transpires that Jim should have a weekly allowance from home, but it hasn't come for six weeks and he hasn't a bean. The meeting votes that the sentence be quashed and it is duly quashed. But what to do about Jim? Finally it is decided to open a subscription fund to put Jim's bike in order . . . and he sets off on his hike happily.

Usually the government's verdict is accepted both by the culprit and the community. On appeal I cannot remember a government sentence being increased. The ordinary procedure on an appeal is for the chairman (nearly always a pupil) to elect a jury to decide the appeal, and in the case of Jim and the bike the jury had disagreed and had left the decision to the general vote.

Certain classes of offences come under the automatic fine rule. If you ride another's cycle without permission there is an automatic fine of sixpence. Swearing down town (but you can swear as much as you like in the school grounds), bad behaviour in the cinema, climbing on roofs, throwing food in the dining-room, these and others are automatic fine rules. Punishments are nearly always fines . . . half a pocket-money or miss a cinema. When, recently, Paxton Chadwick (Chad) was tried for riding Ginger's bike without permission, he

and two other members of the staff, who had also ridden it, were ordered to push each other on Ginger's bike ten times round the front lawn. Four small boys who climbed the ladder of the builders erecting the new workshop were ordered to climb up and down the ladder for ten minutes on end. A jury never seeks advice from an adult, well, I can remember only one occasion when it was done. Three girls had raided the kitchen larder. The government fined them their pocket money. They raided the larder again that night, and the jury fined them a cinema. They raided it once more, and the government was gravelled what to do. The foreman consulted me.

"Give them tuppence reward each," I suggested.

"What? Why, man, you'll have the whole school raiding the larder if we do that."

"You won't," I said. "Try it."

They tried it. Two of the girls refused to take the money, and all three were heard to declare that they would never raid the larder again . . . they didn't for about two months all the same.

If I am giving the impression that our self-government is only a police court I am giving a wrong impression. It sometimes happens that no one has broken a law during the week. The function of the government is to make all laws and to discuss social features of the com-

munity. At the beginning of each term bedtime rules are made by vote . . . you go to bed according to your age. Then questions of general behaviour come up. Sports committees have to be elected, end of term dance committee, the theatre committee, bedtime officers, down town officers (who report any disgraceful behaviour out of the school boundary). The most exciting subject ever brought up is that of food. I have more than once wakened up a dull meeting by proposing that second helpings be abolished. Any sign of kitchen favouritism in the matter of food is severely handled, but when the kitchen brings up the question of food wastage the meeting is not much interested. Children's attitude to food is essentially a personal and self-centred one. Incidentally I remark that Summerhill food is excellent. All visitors praise it, and the children are mostly unconscious of it . . . which is as it should be. Good feeding should come before everything else in a school. No school should require the tuck box system, and when children are well fed the sweets they buy with their pocket money do no harm. Children like sweets because their bodies crave for sugar, and sugar they should have.

In our government meetings all academic discussions are eschewed; children are eminently

practical, and theory bores them. They are concrete and not abstract. I once brought forward a motion that swearing be abolished by law, and I gave my reasons. . . . I had been showing a prospective parent round with her little boy. Suddenly from upstairs came a very strong adjective: the mother hastily gathered her son to her and went off in a hurry.

“Why,” I asked in the general meeting, “should my income suffer because some fathead swears in front of a prospective parent? It isn’t a moral question at all; it is purely financial. You swear and I lose a pupil.”

My question was answered by a lad of fourteen.

“Neill is talking rot,” he said. “Obviously if this woman was shocked she didn’t believe in Summerhill, and even if she had sent her boy, the first time he came home saying Bloody or Hell she would have taken him away.”

The meeting agreed with him, and voted my proposal down. But the swearing business is always cropping up, for it is indeed a matter of moment, so much so that I shall devote a chapter to it later.

The general meeting often has to tackle the problem of bullying. Bullying is not so rife in Summerhill as in strict schools, and the reason for that is not far to seek. Under adult discipline

the child becomes a hater, and as he cannot express his hate of adults with impunity, he takes it out of smaller or weaker boys. This element is absent from Summerhill, and practically every case of bullying is a family one. That is if Peter has a younger brother at home who is the favourite (or the imagined favourite) of Daddy or Mummy, Peter will unconsciously bully the younger boys in the school. But again the only child will bully. At present we have a girl of ten who has come straight from a convent (where she could only take a bath if she had a cloak to hide her nakedness). She bullies the others badly, for she is full of hate and insincerity. We have boys and girls who are really nice kids, but they bully in the process of finding their power outlet. Very often a charge of bullying when investigated by a jury amounts to this, that Jenny called Peggy a lunatic. Juries are pretty hard on bullies, and I notice that the present government has underlined its bullying rule on the notice board. . . . All cases of bullying will be severely dealt with.

It is a fact that any child who persistently complains of being bullied is always a bully. Sadism and masochism are closely allied, and the bullied child always gets some sort of pleasurable satisfaction in being the victim.

Sometimes a case of stealing is brought up. There is seldom any punishment for this, but there is always reparation. Often the government will come to me and say: "John pinched a bob from David. Is this a case of psychology or shall we bring it up?" If I consider it a case for psychology I tell them to leave it to me, and I give John a few Private Lessons, known as P.Ls. Later I shall describe these P.Ls.

If John is a happy, normal boy who has done what we have all done—pinched a bob—I leave the government to charge him, and all that happens is that he is docked of his pocket money until the debt is paid. No culprit ever shows any signs of defiance or hate of the authority of his peers. I am always surprised at the docility they show when punished. This term four of the biggest boys were charged with doing an illegal thing—selling articles from their wardrobes in the town. The law was made on the grounds that it is unfair to the parents who buy the clothes and also unfair to the school, because when kids go home with things missing the parents blame the school for carelessness. The four boys were punished by being kept in the grounds for four days and by being sent to bed at eight each night. They accepted the verdict without a murmur. On the Monday

night when everyone had gone to the town cinema I found Dick in bed reading.

"You are a chump," I said. "The government has all gone to the cinema. Why don't you get up?"

"Don't try to be funny," he said.

This loyalty to their own democracy is an amazing thing. It has no fear in it and no resentment. I have seen a boy go through a long trial for some anti-social act; I have seen him sentenced . . . and then the next case would come on. The chairman elects a new jury for each trial, and as often as not the boy who has just been sentenced is elected as a juryman. The sense of justice that children have has never ceased to make me marvel. And their administrative ability is great. As an education self-government is something of infinite value. I have often heard sensible speeches from children who could not read nor write. They do not become prigs either, and any sign of priggishness is frowned upon by the community. One boy of eleven, a strong exhibitionist, gets up and draws attention to himself by making long involved remarks of obvious irrelevancy. At least he tries to, but the meeting shouts him down. The young have a sensitive nose for insincerity.

One of the drawbacks in self-government is that popularity too often pushes aside ability.

At the beginning of each term Bert is always elected as a member of the government, simply because he is a general favourite. But Bert has not outlived his anti-social component and is more interested in breaking than in making laws. So that regularly each term Bert is accused of being hopeless as a government member and by general vote he is thrown out. Joe, a quiet capable lad of seventeen, an excellent social member, fails to be elected because he is not popular. Sometimes a motion is brought forward that only citizens over twelve should be allowed to vote in a government election, on the ground that the small children have no ideas on ability and merely vote emotionally. It has never been carried, and the vote of a seven-year-old has the same value as my vote has.

In our scheme of self-government there is a peculiar dictatorship element. This is a body known as the Big Five . . . five elder pupils. Their function is the guardianship of the school reputation outside the school. Any crime taking place outside the school grounds comes before the Five. When two girls took money from the pockets of a visiting hockey team they were tried by the Five. The Big Five has unlimited power, even that of expulsion, a power they have never wanted to use, but one which makes it

a thing to respect, for expulsion from Summerhill would be to any child an unspeakable tragedy.

I have expelled pupils myself, that is I have arranged that children should leave, taking care that a proper place was found for them beforehand. In the very few cases in which this has happened my action was prompted by the knowledge that the child in question was a danger or a nuisance to others. That is a difficulty that every teacher is up against: shall I sacrifice twenty children for one? Lucy came from a convent at the age of thirteen. She hated everyone, and bullied her room mates. When at last two girls told me that they didn't want to come back next term because of Lucy I got her mother to send her to a dance school in London. John, aged fourteen, turned out to be an incurable bully. He would hit a small child in the eye just for fun. I had to send him away. Ned, a boy we had had for years, could not live through his gangster stage, so we sent him to Texas, where he lived with the cowboys for over a year. He has now come back to us with his gangster stage behind him. . . . How I wish that Texas were nearer! In each of these cases the general meetings had again and again complained of the presence of these children in the school. I confess to a feeling of

failure in such cases, for previously I have scoffed at schools which solved their own problems by expelling undesirable elements, doing nothing to help the ones expelled. It is some consolation to feel that in each case we have seen to it that the child was not sent back to harsh discipline and moral lectures. And in each case we have done it only after making a brave attempt to help the individual by psychological means. All children are not to be helped by analysis. Some of them won't have it, and they don't see why they should. When an adult goes to a psychoanalyst he feels that he wants to be cured, but if a wild girl is sent to me from a convent she has no desire to be cured, and without the co-operation of the patient every psychologist knows that there is nothing to be done. I find that between the ages of eight and eighteen children do not want analysis, and if one forces it on them the result is nil, for the child simply withdraws into itself and sits silently through the lessons.

Yet children in what I call the latent period will react to social analysis if the environment is one of complete personal freedom. After all Summerhill means personal freedom to be what you like, so long as in being what you like you do not interfere with the freedom of others . . . which is about all that you can demand of any-

one. But this means that your neighbours must have reasonable standards of living. A Summerhill child would feel cramped in being himself if he lived in a community that thought the word *damn* was sinful or that stealing was immoral. You can only be free when you live among others who have the same idea of freedom as you have. An example of that is that of the Public School boy who came to us when seventeen. A week after his arrival he chummed up with the men who fill coal carts at the station, and he began to help them in their loading. He came in to meals with his face and hands all black, but no one said a word. No one cared. It took him a good few weeks to live down his Public School and home idea of cleanliness. When he gave up his coal-heaving he once more became clean in person and dress, but with a difference: cleanliness was no longer something forced on him; his dirt complex had lived itself out. So on a hot day boys and staff will sit at lunch shirtless. No one minds. Summerhill relegates minor things to their proper place—indifference, but this morning crossing the Line I walked into the dining-room for breakfast without my jacket, and the chief steward very quickly informed me that that was not allowed. If Summerhill went to sea I guess that it wouldn't dine in stiff hot evening

shirts as we have to do on this ship, nor would any-one worry if you came to lunch in bathing trunks.

It is the broad outlook that free children acquire that makes self-government so important. Their laws deal with essentials, not appearances (saving the down town laws which are the compromise with a less free civilisation). "Down town," that is the outside world, wastes its precious energy in worrying over trifles . . . as if it matters in the scheme of life whether you wear dress clothes or say Hell. Summerhill, by getting away from the outward nothings of life, can have and really has a community spirit that is in advance of its time. True, it is apt to call a spade a bloody shovel, but any navvy will tell you with truth that a spade *is* a bloody shovel.

In this ship, crossing the equator for the first time, I see so much of what is unessential in life. Most of the passengers talk of what does not matter, and I think that few of them really are aware of life at all. To many passengers ship life is a lazy, flirtatious or restful holiday. Food is in plenty, and if the entertainment is on the childish side that is partly due to lack of space. Yes, life is pleasant. In the heat all you have to do is to cry: "Steward!" and an obliging youth in white comes at once with an iced drink. But when you are aware of things

you see a ship as something different. The stewards appear to get up early and finish very late at night. They are all pasty-faced, for they seldom see the sun. Obviously they have a hard life on any ship. They are not always in white; they wash and scrub while the passengers sleep and dance. Yet most people take them for granted, possibly excusing their indifference by thinking that the end-of-the-voyage tip covers a multitude of services. To enter the dining-room without a jacket is in this life on ship an important shortcoming but to be unconscious of stewards is the thing to do apparently.

Summerhill has its maids, and they work long and hard, and perhaps I ought to begin my reforms at home, but Summerhill maids are not considered inferiors. They dance with us, and our bigger lads take them to dances in the town. They are not asked for deference and respect for employers (Ivy always addresses me as "Neill") and they all appear to be happy in their work. Work is necessary, whereas the frills of service, the bowing and scraping are not only unessential but degrading. Stewards look as if they hated their job, and I heard of one recently, who, rather than wash up his plates, and cups, threw a thousand of them through a porthole.

Summerhill has its insoluble problem of its

middle-class population, yet the future of the world is obviously one of socialism of some kind. This damned possessive system we call capitalism will die, is dying fast, and in the creative society of the future sincerity and a standard of values will count for much. If all schools had real self-government—not the brand that makes the pupils do the dirty police work for the teachers—a new generation would face life with a high standard of public morality, and a scheme of values that eliminated the non-essentials.

I have failed to convey in words what self-government really is like. Every Saturday night at eight we have a full meeting. A chairman is elected on the spot, and the success of the meetings depends largely on whether the chairman is weak or strong, for to keep order among seventy vigorous children is no easy task. The chairman has power to fine noisy citizens, and under a weak chairman the fines run up too much. The staff takes a hand, of course, in the discussions, but as a rule I do not take part. In any "trial" I dare not take a part, for I must remain a neutral. In fact I have seen a lad charged with an offence and get away with it with a complete alibi, after telling me in his P.L. that he had done the deed. I must always be on the side of the individual.

That leads on naturally to the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### BEING ON THE SIDE OF THE CHILD

SUMMERHILL owes its psychology to the greatest child psychologist of our time, Homer Lane. I wrote my *Dominie's Log* in 1915, knowing nothing of psychology at all. It was a groping book: I felt that schooling was all wrong, but did not know how to put it right. I read the report of a lecture by Lane, and in 1917, when I was a cadet in the artillery school at Trowbridge, I made a week-end visit to the Little Commonwealth, in Dorset. I arrived in time to see a self-government meeting, and a breezy one it was. The Commonwealth was divided into houses, and one house was attacking the other on its disorderliness, saying that the rest of the Commonwealth was kept awake late at nights by the unseemly noise coming from the unsocial house. I forget how the meeting ended: all I remember is my surprise to see a company of delinquent children manage their social affairs so easily and cleverly. The meeting went on till eleven, and then Lane sat and talked to me until three in the morning.

It was a new world that he opened up to me, and when next day Lane invited me to come and help when the war should be over, I was delighted. But by the time I was free to go back to civil life the Commonwealth had been closed, and I got a job in King Alfred School, in Hampstead. Luckily Lane had come to Town, and I not only went to every lecture he gave, but also became his patient for analysis.

Lane was a genius, and like all geniuses he was erratic. He sometimes said wild things that could not be proved, and as an analyst he was often unsatisfactory because he was always moving on to something new. A dream would suddenly give him a new theory and he would spend the rest of the session expanding his new theory . . . fascinating but hardly the best analysis. I think he took the wrong turning when he gave up children and went on to adults, for he wasted much time in dealing with almost hopeless neurotics.

Throughout his whole career, however, Lane never wavered from his belief that love alone could cure, and it was his conception of love that made him stand out as a great man. To Lane love was not a sentimental thing, not even an emotional thing: love to him was being on the side of a person: love was approval. His

success with delinquents was due to his loving them. I used to think that children are not conscious of this kind of love, but I had a proof that they are. I had a youth sent to me, a real crook, who stole cleverly. A week after his arrival I had a telephone message from Liverpool. "This is Mr. X speaking (a well-known man in England) and I have a nephew at your school. He has written me asking if he can come to Liverpool for a few days. Do you mind?"

"Not a bit," I answered, "but he has no money. Who will pay his fare? Better get into touch with his parents."

On the following afternoon the boy's mother rang me up saying that they had had a phone message from Uncle Dick, and so far as they were concerned he could go. They had looked up the fare, and it was 28s., and would I give Arthur £2 10s.?

Arthur had put through both calls from a local call box and his imitation of an old uncle's voice was perfect. It was obvious that he had tricked me, for I had given him the £2 10s. before I was conscious of being done. I talked it over with my wife, and we both agreed that the wrong thing to do would be to demand the money back, for that was what had been happening to him for years. My wife suggested

rewarding him, and I agreed. I went up to his bedroom late at night.

"You're in luck to-day," I said cheerfully.

"I jolly well am," he said.

"Yes, but you are in greater luck than you know," I said.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, your mother has just telephoned again," I said easily. "She says she made a mistake about the fare: it isn't 28s. . . . it is 38s. So she asked me if I'd give you another ten bob," and I carelessly threw a ten shilling note on his bed and departed before he could say anything.

He went off to Liverpool next morning, leaving a letter to be given to me after the train had gone. It began: "Dear Neill, I have discovered that you are a greater actor than I am." And for weeks he kept asking me why I had given him that ten shilling note. I said to him: "How did you feel when I gave it to you?"

He thought hard for a minute and then he said slowly: "You know, I got the biggest shock of my life. I said to myself: Here is the first man in my life who has been on my side."

Here was a case of being conscious of the love that is approval, but I should think that usually consciousness is late in coming. In

past days, when I had much to do with misfits and crooks, I again and again rewarded them for stealing, sometimes stole with them, but it was only after a few years when the child was cured that he or she had any realisation of the fact that my approval had helped them.

Approval is just as necessary for normal children as for neurotics. The one commandment that every parent and teacher must obey is this: Thou shalt be on the child's side. The obeying of this commandment is the success of Summerhill, for we are definitely on the child's side . . . and the child knows it unconsciously. I do not say that we are a crowd of angels. There are times when we adults make a fuss, as I did over my potatoes. If I were painting a door and Robert came along and threw mud on my fresh paint I should swear at him heartily, because he is one of us and what I say to him does not matter. But suppose Robert had just come from a hateful school and his mud-slinging was an attempt to get his own back against authority, I should join in his mud-slinging because his salvation is more important than a door. It isn't easy. I have stood by and seen a boy treat my precious lathe badly; I knew that if I protested he would at once identify me with his stern father who threatened to beat

him if he touched his tools. I confess that as I grow older I find it more difficult to approve of the spoilt child in everything he does. Maybe courage lessens. A few years ago we had a spoilt boy of ten who had ruled his home by threatening to jump from a window if he did not get his own way. One day his sister came to me in terror: "Frank says he'll jump from his bedroom window if I don't give him sixpence," she cried, "and I don't have sixpence."

I went upstairs and found Frank poised on his window sill.

"I'm going to jump," he said tensely and glared at me.

"I know," I said. "That's why I came up. I want to see it. Go on, jump."

He looked at me and his look said: "You dirty dog, you see through me."

But I was not courageous there, for I knew that Frank was bluffing. The strange thing is that you can be on the child's side even though you sometimes swear at him. If your life is on the side of the child's life the child realises it, and any minor disagreement you may have about potatoes or scratched motor wings does not disturb the fundamental relationship. It works negatively rather than positively. When you treat a child without bringing in authority

and morality the child feels that you are on his side, because in his previous life authority and morality were policemen who restricted his activities. And children deal much with negatives. When a girl of eight passes me and says in passing: "Neill is a silly fool," I know that that is her negative way of expressing her love. Children do not love so much as want to be loved, and adult approval means love to every child, whereas disapproval means hate. Just before I sailed last week I overheard a boy of sixteen say: "The school will be queer without Neill. Gosh, if the head in my last school had gone off to South Africa wouldn't we have had a binge!"

The attitude of the children to all the staff is similar to their attitude to me. They feel that the staff is on their side all the time.

The most frequent remark that visitors make is that they cannot make out who is staff and who is pupil. It is so true: the feeling of unity is so strong when children are approved of. Thus there is no deference to staff as staff. Staff and pupils have the same food and both have to obey the community laws. The children would resent any special privileges given to the staff, and when I used to give the staff a talk on psychology every week, there was a muttering that

it wasn't fair. I changed the plan and made the talks open to all over twelve, and every Tuesday night my room is filled with eager young folks who not only listen but give their opinions freely. When I say that among the subjects the children have asked me to talk about were The Inferiority Complex, The Psychology of Pinching, The Psychology of the Gangster, the Psychology of Humour, Why did man become a moralist? Masturbation, Crowd Psychology . . . it is obvious that such children will go out into life with a broad clear knowledge of themselves and others. When you approve of children you can talk to them about anything and everything, for approval will make many inhibitions fly away. But the question arises:—Is it possible to approve of children if you do not approve of yourself? And the further question arises:—Is it possible for any man to approve of himself? It depends largely on what Dr. J. C. Young calls awareness. If you are aware of yourself you can approve of yourself, or in other words the more conscious you are of yourself and your motives the more likely you are to be an approver of yourself. Our self-disapproval comes mainly from infancy, and a large part of it originates from the conscience about masturbation. The unhappy child is one

who has too big a conscience about masturbation, and the taking away of this conscience is the greatest step of advance.

The happiness and verve of Summerhill children is largely due to their having got over their guilty conscience about masturbation and sex. They are led to approve of their bodies, and to have no sense of shame about sex. In our open discussion on masturbation boys and girls asked questions and talked quite openly without any embarrassment. One boy who has not outlived the smutty side his prep-school gave him, tried to be pornographic, but the others shut him up, not because he was being pornographic but merely because he was side-tracking an interesting talk. All children are pornographic either openly or more often secretly, but the least pornographic are those who have had no moral taboos about sex in their infancy and early childhood. For that matter adults are pornographic too, especially men. It is a fallacy that women are more pure-minded than men . . . what is purity anyway? . . . but in the main a man's club or bar or canteen is much more likely to be pornographic than a woman's Rural Institute. Pornography is directly proportionate to sex repressions, and I am sure that later on our pupils will be less inclined to

pornography than the children brought up under hush hush methods. As Derrick said to me when he came back on vacation from the university: "Summerhill spoils you in one way . . . you find chaps of your own age too dull. They talk about things I grew out of years ago."

"Sex stories?" I asked.

"Yes, more or less. I like a good sex story myself, but the ones they tell are crude and pointless. But it isn't only sex; other things too. Psychology, politics . . . I don't know, but I find myself tending to chum up with chaps ten years older than myself."

I have more than once mentioned the sincerity of free children. This sincerity is the result of their being approved of. They have no artificial standard of behaviour to live up to, no taboos to restrain them: they have no necessity to live a life that is a lie. But under adult discipline a child must live a lying life, for the mainspring of discipline is fear of censure or punishment. Punishment from their fellows does not involve fear, but when an adult punishes fear comes automatically, for the adult is big and strong and awe-inspiring and, most important of all, a symbol of the feared father or mother.

On Sunday nights I tell the younger children a story about their own adventures. I have

done it for fifteen years, and the strain on the imagination is great. I have taken them to Darkest Africa, under the sea, over the clouds, to heaven, to hell. Some weeks ago I made myself die and Summerhill was taken over by a strict man called Muggins. He made lesson-going compulsory, and if you said even Dash you got caned. I pictured how they all meekly obeyed his orders, and those three to eight year olds got furious with me.

"We didn't. We all ran away. We killed him with a hammer. Think we would stand a man like that?"

In the end I found I could only satisfy them by coming to life again and kicking Mr. Muggins out of the front door. These were mostly children who had never known a strict school, and their reaction of fury was spontaneous and natural. A world in which the master was not on their side was an appalling one for them to think of, not only because of their experience of Summerhill but also because of their experience of home, where Mummy and Daddy are on their side also (if they weren't they would send their children elsewhere).

## CHAPTER V

### THE PRIVATE LESSONS

I NEVER teach. My main work is giving Private Lessons. Most of the children do not require psychological attention, but there are always a proportion just come from other schools, and the P.Ls. are intended to hasten their adaptation to freedom. If a child is all tied up inside he cannot adapt himself to being free. Hence I have a timetable.

Psychoanalysis it is not, strictly speaking. The P.Ls. are informal talks by the fireside: I sit with my pipe in my mouth and the child can smoke if he or she likes. The cigarette is often an easy means of breaking the ice. When a big boy came from a Public School and I asked him to come and have a chat with me, I noticed that his fingers were yellow with nicotine. I took out my cigarette packet and offered it to him.

“Thanks,” he stammered, “but I don’t smoke, sir.”

“Take one, you bloody liar,” I said with a smile, and he took one.

Here I was killing two birds with one stone. Here was a boy to whom headmasters were

stern moral disciplinarians to be cheated every time. By offering him a cigarette I was showing that I approved of his smoking. By calling him a bloody liar I was showing him that I could meet him on his own level, and at the same time attacking his authority complex by showing that a headmaster could swear easily and cheerfully. I wish I could have photographed his facial expression during that first interview. He had been expelled for stealing.

"I hear you are a bit of a crook," I said. "What's your best way of swindling the railway company?"

"I never tried to swindle it, sir."

"Oh," I said, "this won't do. You must have a try. I know lots of methods," and I told him a few. His mouth gaped. This surely was Bedlam he had come to. The Head telling him how to be a better crook? Years later he told me that that interview was the biggest shock of his life.

But now that problem children are nearly eliminated it may be asked what necessity there is for P.Ls. What kind of kids need them? The best answer will be a few illustrations.

Lucy, the infant mistress, comes to me and says that Peggy seems very unhappy and anti-social. I say: "Righto, tell her to come and have a P.L." Peggy comes over to my sitting-room.

"I don't want a P.L.," she says as she sits down. "They are just silly."

"Absolutely," I agree. "Waste of time. We won't have one."

She considers this.

"Well," she says slowly, "I don't mind a tiny wee one." By this time she has placed herself on my knee. I ask about her Daddy and Mummy and especially about her little brother, who is a very silly little ass.

"He must be," I agree. "Do you think that Mummy likes him better than she likes you?"

"She likes us both the same," she says quickly, and adds: "She says that anyway." Sometimes the fit of unhappiness has arisen from a quarrel with another child, but more often it is a letter from home that has caused the trouble, a letter perhaps saying that her brother or sister has got a new doll or bike. The end of the P.L. generally is that Peggy goes out quite happily.

With new-comers it is not so easy. When we get a child of eleven who has been told that babies are brought by the doctor it takes some hard work to free the child from lies and fears. For naturally such a child has a guilt sense towards masturbation, and that sense of guilt must be destroyed if the child is to find happiness.

Among young children I find bed-wetting the

most difficult problem of all. I have had but little success in curing it. When it is a case of repressed masturbation (the wetting being masturbation in sleep and therefore guiltless) it is easy, but I have found bed-wetting among children who have never had repressions about sex at all. Fundamentally it is a regression to infancy; the motive is to be a baby again and be tended by mother. The cure should result from letting the child have its motive fulfilled, but in a school it is impossible to do this, even if the mother substitutes there are willing to help. In general the cure for any habit is the living of it out, and it is wrong to try to force a child to grow up. All punishment and talks make bed-wetting more fixed than ever. Hard as it is, we must approve of the wetting if we are to help the child, only our approval will not cure so swiftly as the approval of Mummy.

Some years ago we had a small boy sent to us because he messed his trousers all day long. His mother had thrashed him for it, and in desperation had finally made him eat his faeces. You can imagine the problem we had to face. I have a vague idea that I mentioned this lad in an earlier book. Briefly his case was that of a boy with a younger brother. The messing began with the birth of the brother, and the motive was

apparently: "He has taken Mummy's love from me; if I am like him and mess my trousers like he messes his nappies, Mummy will love me too."

I gave him P.Ls. and showed him what his motive was, but it is only in textbooks of psychology that cures are sudden and dramatic.

For over a year that boy messed himself three times daily. No one said a bitter word to him, and Mrs. Corkhill, our nurse then, did all the cleaning without one word of reproach . . . but she did protest when I began to reward him every time he did a really big mess. During all this period the boy was a hateful little devil . . . no wonder! He stayed with us for three years, a nice lovable lad, absolutely clean after his cure. His mother took him away on the ground that she wanted a school where he would learn something. He came back to see us after a year at such a school, came back a changed lad—insincere, afraid, unhappy. He said he would never forgive his mother for taking him away from Summerhill, and he never will. Strangely enough, he is about the only case of trouser messing we have had in fifteen years. I am sure that every case is one of hate against the mother for starving of love.

Nowadays I never have to deal with extreme cases like this. No small child requires regular

P.Ls., and the ideal circumstances are where a child demands a P.L. Some of the older ones do. There was Charlie, aged sixteen, who felt very much inferior to lads of his own age. I asked him when he felt most inferior, and he said when they were bathing, because his penis was much smaller than theirs. I explained to him how this arose. He was the youngest child in a family of six sisters, all much older than himself . . . there was a gulf of ten years between him and his youngest sister. The household was a feminine one (the father was dead) and the big sisters got all the jam and did all the bossing. Hence he identified himself with the feminine in life so that he, too, could have power.

After about ten P.Ls. Charlie stopped coming to me. I asked him why.

"Don't need P.Ls. now," he said cheerfully, "my tool is as big as Bert's now."

But there was more in the short analysis than that, for he had been told that masturbation would make him impotent when he was a man, and his fear (and desire) for impotency had affected the physical. So that his cure was also due to the destruction of his guilt complex and the counter-action of the silly lie about impotency. Charlie left the school a year or two ago and is now a fine, healthy, happy youth who will get on in life.

Then there is the case of Sylvia, not really a sex case at all. Sylvia has a stern father who never praises her, who, on the contrary, criticises and nags her all day long. Her one desire in life is to get father's love, and she sits in my room and weeps bitterly while she tells her story. Hers is a difficult case to help, for all the analysis of the daughter will not change the father. I see no solution until she is old enough to get away from home, and I have warned her that there is a danger that she may marry the wrong man merely to escape from the father.

"What sort of wrong man?" she asked.

"A man like your father, one who will treat you sadistically," I said. This a sad case. With us Sylvia is a social, friendly girl who offends no one, and at home she is said to be a devil. Obviously it is the father who needs analysis, not the daughter.

Another insoluble case is that of little Florence. She is illegitimate and doesn't know it. My experience is that every illegitimate child knows unconsciously that it is illegitimate, and Florence assuredly knows that there is some mystery behind her. I have told the mother that the only cure for her daughter's hate and unhappiness is to tell her the truth.

"But, Neill, I daren't. I don't care a damn

myself, but if I tell her she won't keep it to herself and my mother will cut her out of her will."

Well, well, we'll just have to wait till the old lady dies I am afraid. You can do nothing if a vital truth has to be kept dark.

Child analysis is extremely difficult during the latent period. An old boy of twenty came back to stay with us for a time, and he asked me for a few P.Ls.

"But I gave you dozens when you were here," I said.

"I know," he said sadly, "dozens that I didn't want, but now I feel I want them."

Nowadays I give up any analysis or shall I call it re-education if there is a resistance against it. With the average child when you have cleared up the birth and masturbation question and shown how the family situation has made hates and jealousies, there is nothing more to be done. I see no necessity to seek Freudian or Melanie Kleinian depths of castration wishes against mother. Curing a neurosis in a child is a matter of the release of emotion, and what release of emotion any child or adult can get out of being told that he has a Birth Trauma complex or a mother-castration wish I cannot discover. I recall a case of a boy of fifteen I tried to analyse. For weeks he sat silent,

answering only in monosyllables. I decided to be drastic, and at his next P.L. I said to him: "I'm going to tell you what I think of you this morning. You're a lazy, stupid, conceited, spiteful fool."

"Am I?" he said red with anger. "Who do you think you are anyway?"

From that moment he talked easily and usefully.

One of the most charming analyses was that of George, a boy of eleven. His father was a small tradesman in a village near Glasgow. The boy was sent to me by a Glasgow doctor. His neurosis was one of intense fear. He feared to be away from home, even at the village school, and he screamed in terror when he had to leave home. With great difficulty his father got him to come to Summerhill: he wept and clung to his father so that the father could not return home. I advised him to stay for a few days. I had already had the case history from the doctor, and the doctor's comments were in my estimation correct and most useful. The question of getting the father to go home was becoming an acute one. I tried to talk to George, but he wept and sobbed that he wanted to go home. "This is just a prison," he sobbed.

I went on talking and ignored his tears.

"When you were four," I said, "your little brother was taken to the infirmary and they brought him back in a coffin. (Increased sobbing.) Your fear of leaving home is that the same thing will happen to you . . . you'll go home in a coffin. (Louder sobs.) But that's not the main point, George, me lad: you killed your brother."

Here he protested violently, and threatened to kick me.

"You didn't really kill him, George, but you thought that he got more love from your mother than you got, and you sometimes wished he would die, and when he did die you had a terrible guilty conscience because you thought that your wishes had killed him, and that God would kill you if you went away from home as punishment for your guilt."

His sobbing ceased, and next day, although he made a scene at the station, he let his father go home. George did not get over his homesickness for some time, but the sequel was that in eighteen months he insisted on travelling home for the vacation alone, crossing London from station to station alone, and he did the same on his way back to school. He was one of the nicest lads I have known, bright and intelligent. After two years he came to me.

"I'll be leaving at the end of this term," he said.

“But why?”

“I must. I like Summerhill a lot, but my folks are not very well off and it'll be cheaper to stay with them and go to Greenock Academy (but it wasn't Greenock). Anyway I'm cured now and I don't need Summerhill.”

We were all very sorry to lose him, and when, three weeks ago, the father sent us a local paper showing that George was in the prize list of his Academy, we were all happy about it.

More and more I come to the conclusion that analysis is not necessary when children can live out their complexes in freedom, yet I see that in a case like that of George freedom would not be enough. In the past I have analysed young thieves and seen a cure result, but I have had thieves who refused to come to P.Ls. . . . and in three years they were cured also. I have puzzled much about this business of curing. I have often asked myself why it is that one man will go to Freud and find that his sex is at the root of his neurosis and so be cured. And yet if the same man had gone to Adler and found that his neurosis resulted from his organ inferiority and will to power he would have been cured also. I am forced to the conclusion that analysis does not cure. Something else cures, but what? In the case of Summerhill I

say it is love that cures, approval, freedom to be true to self. Of our seventy children only a small fraction has P.Ls., and when I return from my lecture tour in South Africa I hope to reduce the list of P.Ls. drastically, and spend some time working with the children in hand-work and dramatics and dancing. Analysis is reductive work, and is therefore tiring after a long period of it: I want more creative work now.

Here I take up a question that is often put to me.

“But isn’t Summerhill a one man show? Could it do without your P.Ls.? Could it carry on without you?”

Summerhill is by no means a one man show. My wife is just as important as I am, and her reactions to children is as psychological as my own. In the day by day working of the school she is much more important than I am, and much more efficient in handling business affairs and parents and correspondence. Still she and I are important, for it is our idea of non-interference that has made the school. But the staff, although it does not handle psychology, has a psychological attitude to the children, that is, like my wife and myself, they know *what not to do . . .* which is less dangerous than knowing

what to do. I know I could leave the school for a year feeling that the staff would carry on in the right way. George Corkhill, who has been our Chemistry Master for about twelve years, would never do the wrong thing with a child. Lucy Francis, the kindergarten mistress, would carry on straight in the Summerhill tradition. So would the newer members of the staff. I have nothing but praise for our staff. In most schools where I have taught the staffroom was a little hell of intrigue and hate and jealousy. Our staffroom is a happy place . . . but it is so difficult to keep the kids out . . . and the spites so often seen are absent. That is because under freedom the adults acquire the same happiness and goodwill that the pupils acquire. Sometimes a new member of the staff will react to freedom very much in the same way as children react: he may go unshaved, stay abed too long mornings, even break school laws. Luckily the living out of complexes takes a much shorter time with adults than it takes with children.

I find that our children seldom dream, and if they do the dreams are unemotional. A common type is this: "I was standing on a station platform and a train came in and then it changed and I was walking along the line and then somebody came and said that Ginger's bike was

broken." Neither the dream nor the associations to it give the child any emotion or apparent interest. As a rule dreams do not help me much unless they are nightmares. It is surprising how much ghosts frighten even children who have been brought up freely without punishment or blame or taboo. In the Cottage (the Kindergarten house) there is always at least one child who frightens the others by telling ghost stories. And every child declares: "I know that there aren't ghosts, but I am frightened." What these ghosts are I do not know. Psychology, which is at the stone age, cannot lay ghosts that it cannot lay hands on. I know the Freudian explanation of such things as ghosts, but it does not satisfy me. Nor to children are ghosts the returned dead, and our Cottage children never connect them with death. They are simply unknown things in white that chase you at night. Fear of ghosts seldom survives the age of ten, and at any time it is not a terror; rather is it a pleasurable thrill.

I find hardly any fear of thunder among our small children: they will sleep out in small tents through the most violent of storms (the government makes a law that all tents must be far away from trees and wire fences). Nor do I find much fear of the dark. Sometimes a boy

of eight will pitch his tent right at the far end of the field, and he will sleep there alone for nights. Freedom encourages fearlessness, and I have often seen weedy, timid little chaps grow into sturdy, fearless youths, but to generalise would be wrong, for there are introverted children who never become brave. Some folks keep their ghosts for life. And the chief difficulty in dealing with ghosts is our ignorance of prenatal conditions, for no one knows if a pregnant mother can convey her own fears to her unborn child. If a child has been brought up without fear, and in spite of that still has fears, then it is possible that he has brought his fears with him. On the other hand, a child must acquire fears from the world around it. To-day even small children cannot help hearing about Abyssinia and poison gas and coming wars with their bombs. Fear must be associated with such things, but if there is no unconscious fear of sex and hell to add to the reality fear of gas and bombs, the fear of these will be a normal one, not a phobia. A phobia is a fear of a symbol. Fear of a lion is genuine fear; fear of a house spider is a phobia.

I only give P.Ls. for emotional purposes. If a child is unhappy I give him a P.L., but if he can't learn to read or hates mathematics I do not try to cure him, because reading and

counting are of so little moment in life. Sometimes in the course of a P.L. it comes out that the inability to learn to read dates from Mummy's constant promptings to be "a nice, clever boy like your brother," or the hatred of maths. comes from dislike of a previous maths. teacher. Maths., however, have a complicated psychology, and the symbols get mysteriously linked up with sex symbols just as numbers do. I have seen the lifting of the masturbation guilt destroy the anti-maths. complex.

There sometimes arises a jealousy about P.L.s. . . . "Why should Mary get P.L.s. and not me?" There have been cases in which girls have deliberately and consciously behaved as problems merely to be included in the P.L. list . . . one of them smashed some windows and when asked what her idea was, replied: "I want Neill to give me P.L.s." It is usually a girl who behaves in this way, a girl whose father has not, in her estimation, paid sufficient attention to her. Naturally I am the father symbol for all the children, and my wife is the mother symbol. Socially my wife fares more badly than I do, for she gets all the unconscious hate of mother displaced on to her by the girls, while I get their love. The boys give their mother love to my wife and their father hate to me, but

boys do not express hate so easily as girls. That is due to their being able to deal so much with things instead of with people. A boy kicks a ball while a girl spits catty words at a mother symbol. But to be fair I must say that it is only during a certain period that girls are catty and difficult to live with—the pre-adolescent and the first year of adolescence period, and not all girls go through the stage; much depends on the previous school and more still on the mother's attitude to authority.

In the P.Ls. I point out relationships between reactions to home and school. Any criticism of me I translate as one of father; any accusation against my wife I show to be one against mother. I try to keep analysis objective, that is I do not enter into subjective depths in the Jung and Silberer manner. That would be unfair to children. There are occasions, naturally, when a subjective explanation is necessary, as in the case of Jane recently. Jane, aged thirteen, went round the school telling various children that Neill wanted them. I had a stream of callers . . . "Jane says you want me."

I told Jane later that sending others to me meant that she wanted to come herself.

What is the technique of a P.L.? How do I begin with a new pupil? I have no set method. Sometimes I begin with a question: "When

you look in the glass do you like your face?" The answer is always no. "What part of your face do you hate most?" The invariable answer is: "My nose." Adults give the same reply. The face is the person so far as the outside world is concerned. We think of faces when we think of people, and we look at faces when we talk to people. So that the face becomes the outside picture of the inner self. When a child says he dislikes his face he means his personality, so that my next step is to leave the face.

"What do you hate most in yourself?" I ask, and usually the answer is a corporal one . . . "My feet are too big." "Too fat." "Too little." "My hair." I never give an opinion, never agree that he or she is fat or lean, nor do I force things. If the body is of interest we talk about it until there is nothing more to be said. Then we go on to the personality. I often give an exam.

"I am going to write down a few things and examine you in them. You give your own marks. For example I ask you what percentage out of a hundred you would give yourself for—say—ability at games or for bravery and so on," and the exam. begins. Here is a recent one of a boy of fourteen.

Beauty . . . Oh, not much, about 45 per cent.  
Brains . . . Um, 60.

Bravery . . . 25

Loyalty . . . I don't let my pals down . . . 80.

Musicality . . . 0.

Handwork . . . 90.

Hate . . . That's too difficult . . . no, I can't answer that one.

Religion . . . 2.

Games . . . 66.

Social feeling . . . 90.

Idiocy . . . Oh, about 190 per cent.

Naturally his answers give opportunity for discussion. I find it best to begin always with the ego: it awakens the interest, and when later we go on to the family the child talks easily and with interest.

With young children the technique is eclectic. I follow the child's lead. A typical first P.L. with a six-year-old girl is that of Margaret. She comes into my room and says: "I want a P.L."

"Righto," I say.

She sits down in an easy chair.

"What is a P.L.?" she asks.

"It isn't anything to eat," I say, "but somewhere in this pocket I have a caramel . . . ah, got it," and I give her the sweet.

"Why do you want a P.L.?" I ask.

"Evelyn had one and I want one too."

"Good. You begin it. What do you want to talk about?"

"I've got a dolly. (Pause). Where did you get that thing on the mantelpiece? (She obviously does not want to wait for an answer.) Who was in this house before you came?"

Her questions point to a desire to know some vital truth, and I have a good suspicion that it is the truth about birth.

"Where do babies come from?" I ask suddenly.

Margaret gets up and marches to the door.

"I hate P.Ls.," she says, and departs, but a few days later she asks for another P.L., and so we progress.

Little Tommy, aged six, also did not mind P.Ls. so long as I refrained from mentioning "rude" things, and for the first three sessions he went out indignantly, for I knew that only rude things interested him. He was one of the victims of the masturbation Verbot.

It will be seen that the P.Ls. are really a re-education. Their object is to lop off all complexes given by morality and fear. Many children never have them and do not want them—the children who have been properly brought up without parental lies and lectures. I say that a free school could be run without them, for they merely speed up the re-education by a scavenging spring cleaning before the summer of freedom.

I find that analysis does not work at once. The

analysed person does not benefit completely for some time, usually about a year. Hence I never feel pessimistic about older pupils who leave school in what we might describe a half-baked psychological condition. There was Tom, sent to us because he had been a failure at his Public School. I gave him a year's intensive analysis, and there was no apparent result. When he left Summerhill he looked like being a failure all through life. But a year later his parents wrote that he had suddenly decided to be a doctor and was studying hard at the university. Bill seemed a more hopeless case. His analysis took three years. He left school apparently an aimless youth of eighteen. He drifted about from job to job for over a year, and then he decided to be a farmer. All reports say that he is doing well and is keen on his work.

The same sort of experience happens to adults who have been analysed. It seems that after analysis has swept away the accumulation of dead litter that has warped life, there is a fallow period, a period of emptiness: the outworn emotions have been got rid of but nothing has taken their place. It is not the analyst's job to attempt to fill that void; the patient must do that for himself. And my experience is that he does it every time.

## CHAPTER VI

### A DAY IN SUMMERHILL

**B**REAKFAST is from 8.15 to 9, and the staff and pupils fetch their breakfast from the kitchen hatch which is opposite to the dining-room. Beds are supposed to be made by 9.30 when lessons begin. At the beginning of each term a time-table is posted up. Children are divided into classes according to their age and interest; the classes being called by Greek letters. Thus Corkhill in the laboratory may have on Monday the Betas, on Tuesday the Gammas and so on. Max has a similar time-table for English, Cyril for Mathematics, Roger for Geography, my wife for history. The juniors usually stay with their own teacher most of the morning, but they also go to chemistry or the art-room. There is, of course, no compulsion to attend lessons, but if Jimmy comes to English on Monday and does not make an appearance again until the Friday of the following week, the others quite rightly object that he is keeping the work back, and they may throw him out.

Lessons go on until one, but the infants and juniors lunch at 12.30. The school has to be fed in three relays, and the staff and seniors sit down to lunch at 1.45. Afternoons are completely free for everyone. What they all do in the afternoon I do not know. I garden, and seldom see youngsters about. I see the juniors playing gangsters, but some of the seniors busy themselves with motors and radio and drawing and painting. In good weather they play games. Some tinker about in the workshop, mending their cycles or making boats or revolvers.

Tea is at four, and at five various activities begin. The juniors like to be read to; the middle group likes work in the art room—painting, linoleum cuts, leather-work, basket making, and there is usually a busy group in the pottery; in fact the pottery seems to be a favourite haunt morning and evening. The Matriculation group works from five onwards. The wood and metal workshop is full every night.

There is no work, that is, no organised work, after six or six-thirty. On Monday nights the pupils go to the local cinema on their parents' bill, and when the programme changes on the Thursday those who have the money may go again. Pocket money is given out on Thursday for this reason.

On Tuesday night the staff and seniors have my psychological talk. The juniors have various reading groups then. Wednesday night is lounge night, that is dance night. Dance records are selected from a great pile . . . and as the lounge is next door to our sitting-room I dread Wednesday nights, for the tunes that the children like are to me simply a dreadful noise. Hot Rhythm is about the only thing in life that makes me feel murderous. They are all good dancers, and some visitors say that they feel inferior when they dance with them.

Thursday night has nothing special on, for the seniors go to the cinema in Leiston or Aldeburgh, and Friday is left for any special event, such as play rehearsing. Saturday night is our most important one for it is General Meeting night. Dancing usually follows, and Sunday is our Theatre evening.

There is no distinct time-table for handwork. We have so far been handicapped by having only our stable loft as a wood and metalwork room, but with Shand's new workshop I hope to see more enthusiasm for handwork. There are no set lessons in woodwork. Children make what they want to, and what they want to make is nearly always a toy revolver or gun or boat or kite. They are not much interested in elaborate

joints of the dovetail variety; even the older boys do not fancy elaborate joints. Not many of them take an interest in my own hobby, hammered brasswork, because you can't attach a phantasy to a brass bowl.

A workshop is the most troublesome department of a free school. In the early days the workshop was always open, and as a result every tool got lost or damaged, for a child of nine would use a fine chisel as a screwdriver, or take out a pair of pliers to mend his bike and leave them lying on the path. I had my own private workshop separated from the main workshop by a partition and locked door. My conscience kept pricking me; I felt that I was being selfish and a-social, and at last I knocked down the partition. In six months there wasn't a good tool in what had been my division. One boy used up all the letter punches making cotter pins for his motor-cycle; another tried to put my lathe in screw-cutting gear when it was running. Polished planishing hammers for brass and silver work were used for breaking bricks. Tools disappeared and were never found. Worst of all the interest in handwork died away, for the elder pupils said: "What's the good of going into the workshop? All the tools are rotten now." And rotten they were. Planes had teeth

in their blades; and saws had none. I proposed at a meeting that the workshop be locked again, and the motion was carried. But in showing visitors round I had a feeling of shame when I had to unlock the workshop each time . . . What! Freedom . . . and locked doors? It looked bad indeed, and I decided to give the school an extra workshop which would remain open all the time. I got one fitted out with everything necessary—bench, vice, saws, chisels, planes, hammers, pliers, set squares, etc. One or two of the bigger lads sharpened up all the tools.

One day about four months later I was showing a party round the school. When I unlocked the workshop one of them said: "This doesn't look like freedom, does it?"

"Well," I said hurriedly, "you see the children have another workshop which is open all day long. Come along, I'll show you it."

There was nothing left in it except the bench. Even the vice had gone, and in what sundry corners of our twelve acres the chisels and hammers lay I never knew.

The workshop business continued to worry the staff, but myself most of all, because tools mean much to me. I concluded that what was wrong was that the tools were communal.

“Now,” I said to myself, “if we introduce the possessive element, if each child has his own kit of tools.” I brought it up at a meeting, and the idea was well received. Next term some of them brought back kits of tools, and in two months these also were kicking about the grounds. I had to conclude that children are not interested in tools. Possibly it is the range of ages that causes most of the trouble, for assuredly tools mean almost nothing to small boys and girls. The position to-day (Summer, 1936) is that Parsons, our handwork teacher, keeps the workshop locked when he isn’t there, and I keep my own workshop locked . . . I put the partition back some time ago. I graciously allow a few senior pupils to use my shop when they want to, and I admit that they do not abuse it, for they are at the stage when care of tools is a conscious necessity for good work.

Locking doors has increased recently at Summerhill. I brought the matter up one Saturday night.

“I don’t like it,” I said. “I took visitors round this morning and had to unlock the workshop, the laboratory, the pottery and the theatre. I propose that all public rooms be left open all day.”

There was a storm of dissent.

"The laboratory must be kept locked because of the poisons, and as the pottery is joined on to the laboratory it has to be kept locked too."

"We won't have the workshop left open. Look what happened last time?"

"Well, then," I pleaded, "surely to goodness we can leave the theatre open. Nobody will run away with the stage."

The playwrights, actors, actresses, stage-manager, lightsman—they all rose at once.

Said the lightsman: "You left it open this morning and in the afternoon some idiot switched on all the lights, 3,000 watts at ninepence a unit."

Another said: "The small kids take out the costumes and dress up in them."

The upshot was that my proposal to leave doors unlocked was supported by two hands—my own and a girl of seven, who, I discovered later, thought that we were still voting on the previous motion . . . that children of seven be allowed to go to the cinema.

The hardest lesson we adults have had to learn is that children have no regard for property. They do not destroy it deliberately; they destroy it unconsciously. In our innocence we lined their bedrooms with beaverboard in order to make them warmer. Beaverboard is a kind of

thick pasteboard, and a small child has only to see it to start picking holes in it. The beaver-board wall of the ping-pong room looks like Ypres after a bombardment. Boys seem to be more destructive than girls, possibly because they are less conscious, but destructiveness is seldom a senseless thing. The boring of beaver-board is similar to nose boring, and it is usually quite unconscious, but destruction often has a creative meaning and intention. If a boy needs a piece of metal for a boat keel he will take a nail if he can find one, but if he cannot find a nail he will use my precious Whitworth taps if one of them happens to be about the right size. A tap, like a nail, is to a child a chunk of metal. A bright lad once used a guinea white-wash brush for tarring a roof.

We have learned that children have values that are entirely different from adult values. If a school tries to uplift a child by giving it beautiful classical paintings on the walls and beautiful furniture in the rooms, it is beginning at the wrong end. Children are primitives, and until they ask for culture they should live in as primitive an environment as we can give them. Nine years ago when we came to our present house we had the agony of seeing primitive lads throwing knives at beautiful oak doors. We

hastily bought two railway carriages and made them into a bungalow with a roof over all, and a sitting-room between, and a bathroom overhead. There our primitives could chuck their knives as much as they wanted to. Yet to-day the carriages are not in a bad state. They are inhabited by boys from twelve to eighteen, and the majority of them have reached the stage of caring for comfort and decorations. Some of them keep their compartments beautifully tidy and clean: others live in untidiness, and they are mostly boys who have come from Public Schools. You can always tell the ex-Public School lads in Summerhill . . . they are the most unwashed and wear the greasiest flannel bags.

Girls, on the whole, are tidier than the boys. Seldom do we get a girl who won't wash. We have one at present, age nine, just arrived from a home where Granny had a complex about cleanliness and apparently washed Mildred ten times a day. Her housemother came to me saying: "Mildred hasn't washed for a week. She won't have a bath and she is beginning to smell. What shall I do?"

"Send her in to me," I said, and Mildred came in looking very dirty in hands and face. "Look here," I said sternly, "this won't do."

"But I don't want to wash," she protested.

"Shut up," I said. "Who's talking about washing? Look in the glass. (She did so). What do you think of your face?"

"It isn't very clean, is it?" she said with a grin.

"It's too clean," I said. "I won't have girls with clean faces in this school. Now get out."

She went straight to the coal-cellar and rubbed her face black. She came back to me triumphantly.

"Will that do?" she asked cheerfully.

I examined her face with due gravity.

"No," I said. "There is a patch of white on that cheek."

Mildred had a bath that night.

Girls are no more tidy in their rooms than boys are, that is girls up to fourteen. They dress dolls and make theatre costumes and they have their floor littered with rubbish, but it is all creative rubbish. Our boys and girls from about fifteen onwards are tidy and concerned about their personal appearance. And up to the age of eight children seem to like tidiness. Our Cottage is the tidiest place in the school, but then the Cottage has Doris in charge of the rooms and belongings, and Doris is a gem. But Ivy who has charge of the Carriages with

the gangster boys, finds that their ideas of tidiness are in conflict with hers, and the conflict cannot solve the disorderliness.

Parents too often attach far too much importance to tidiness. It is one of the seven deadly virtues, and the man who prides himself on his tidiness is usually a second-rate fellow who values the second best in life. The tidiest person has the most untidy mind. . . . I say it with all the detachment of a man whose desk always looks like a heap of papers under a No Litter notice in a public park.

I sometimes daydream about the school I should build if I had money. It would be built by the village blacksmith, at least the department for boys and girls between eight and fourteen would be. Inspired by the wonderful pictures I used to see of school children in America building their own school, I used to think that such a way was the only way. It isn't. Believe me it isn't. If children build their own school be sure that some gentleman with a breezy, benevolent authority is standing by shouting encouragement lustily. When this authority is not present children simply do not build schools.

Last summer we needed a sanatorium, and we decided to build one ourselves, a proper san. of brick and cement. None of us had ever

laid a brick. We started in, and a few pupils helped to dig the foundations and knock down brick walls for the bricks. *But they demanded payment.* We refused to give wages, and in the end the san. was built by staff and visitors. The job was too dull for children, and they had no self-interest in it. But at the beginning of this term when they wanted a cycle shed they built one themselves without any help from the staff.

I am writing of children, not as we adults think they should be, but of children as they really are. Their real community sense does not develop until the age of eighteen or more. Their interests are immediate, and the future does not exist for them. They are so much more unconscious than we are. I know that much of the work I do has a dual motive; I dig in order to get potatoes, but I realise that I could use the time more profitably if I wrote newspaper articles and paid a labourer to dig the garden. I dig because the second motive is more important to me than newspaper guineas . . . I want to keep healthy. My friend, R. C. Watson, the Aldeburgh car dealer (his advertisements in the motor papers are works of art) stands and tells me what a fool I am to dig in an age of mechanics, and I tell him that motors are ruining the health

of the nation because no one walks or digs nowadays. He and I are old enough to be conscious of health problems, but a child is completely unconscious of health. No boy would dig in order to keep himself fit, so that in any work he has only a single motive—his interest at the time. He might justly reason thus:—What's the use of a san. to me? I'm not sick and ain't going to be sick. But a bike shed, now, that's different. My saddle will keep dry at nights."

Boys and girls who would not lend a hand to mix cement, will spend days digging deep trenches in a phantasy warfare. That may be the reason why we get such good reports of the industry of our ex-pupils: they have lived out their phantasy self-centred stage in Summerhill, and can face the realities of life without any unconscious longing for the playhood of childhood.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SEX QUESTION

OPPONENTS of co-education are those who fear that if you have boys and girls educated together they will sleep together. They do not say that this is behind their doubts and fears: they rationalise. . . . Girls have a slower tempo in learning . . . it makes boys effeminate and girls masculine . . . and so on. But deep down is the moral fear, which is a jealous fear. The old want the young to be moral because the old want to keep the best things in life for themselves. That is the only excuse for morality. All other excuses are evasions. Sex is the greatest pleasure in the world, and it is repressed because it is the greatest pleasure in the world.

So that every now and again an adult comes to the school and says: "But don't they all sleep with each other?" and when I answer that they don't, he or she cries: "But why not? At their age I would have had a hell of a good time."

It is necessary to discuss sex as it appears at various ages. Freud has made us all familiar with the idea that sex is there from the beginning

of life, that the baby has a sexual pleasure in sucking, and that gradually the erotic zone of the mouth gives place to that of the genitals. Thus masturbation in a child is a natural discovery, not a very important discovery at first, because the genitals are not so pleasurable as the mouth or even the skin. It is the parental verbot that makes masturbation so great a complex, and the sterner the verbot the deeper the sense of guilt and the greater the compulsion to indulge.

The well brought up infant should come to school with no guilty feeling about masturbation at all. There are few, if any, of our Cottage children who have any special interest in masturbation, because no verbot has made the interest a guilty, hidden one. Sex to them has not the attraction of something mysterious: from their earliest time with us (if they have not been told at home) they know the facts of birth, not only where babies come from but how they are made. At that early age such information is received without emotion, partly because it is given without emotion. So it comes that at the age of fifteen or seventeen such children can discuss sex without any feeling of wrong or pornography.

It is the removal of the guilt complex about masturbation that makes Summerhill what a

doubter would call "safe." It is this freedom from guilt that has given us a record of sixteen years without any signs of homosexuality. Some years ago a Public School boy tried to introduce sodomy, but he had no success, and was incidentally surprised and alarmed when he discovered that the whole school knew about his efforts. This absence of homosexuality is of the greatest importance. It suggests that homosexuality is masturbation on promotion . . . you masturbate with the other bloke and he shares the guilt with you and thus lightens your burden. When masturbation is not considered a sin the necessity to share guilt does not arise. The root basis of the whole sex question is masturbation. When that is free the child naturally goes on to heterosexuality at the proper time. Many unhappy marriages are due to the fact that both parties are suffering from an unconscious hate of sexuality arising from buried self-hate due to masturbation verbots. The question of masturbation is *the* super-eminent one in education. Subjects, discipline, order, games . . . all are vain and futile if the masturbation question remains unsolved. Freedom in masturbation means glad, happy, eager children who are not much interested in masturbation. Masturbation verbot means miserable, unhappy

children often prone to colds and epidemics, hating themselves and consequently hating others. I say that the happiness and cleverness of Summerhill children is due to the removal of the bogie of fear and self-hate that masturbation verbots give.

I have said that there is no homosexuality in Summerhill. That is true, but there is in Summerhill, as in any other place where there are children, an unconscious homosexuality during a certain stage of development. Children up to puberty are largely homosexual though unconsciously homosexual. It is passive, negative. Our boys of nine and ten have no use for girls at all. They despise them. Their unconscious homosexuality makes them go in gangs, but gangs that are not interested in sex: their interest is making folks "stick 'em up!" So girls of that age go in girls' gangs: their interest is still in their own sex. Boys and girls are not much interested in each other until they are about fifteen or sixteen.

I am often asked if I have any fears that things may happen between the older pupils. I have no fears, because I know that I am not dealing with children who have a repressed and therefore unnatural interest in sex. Some years ago we had two pupils arrive at the same time, a boy of seventeen from a Public School and a

girl of sixteen from a girls' school. They fell in love with each other. They were always together. I met them late one night, and I stopped.

"I don't know what you two are doing," I said, "and morally I don't care, for it isn't a moral question at all. But economically I do care. If you, Kate, had a kid my school would be ruined."

I went on to expand the theme.

"You see," I said, "you have just come to Summerhill. To you it means freedom to do what you like. You have quite naturally, no feeling for the school, and if you had been here from the age of seven I'd never have had to mention it, for you would have had so strong an attachment to the school that you would think of it."

I never spoke to them again on the subject. It was the only possible way of dealing with the problem, for sex is not a moral problem at all.

Children who are freely brought up about sex matters have an open mind about what is called vulgarity. A week or two ago I heard that clever artist, Max Miller, in the London Palladium. Max sails very near the wind in a breezy Elizabethan manner, but it struck me then that he gets laughs from his audience that he couldn't have got from Summerhill. Women went off into shrieks when he mentioned ladies' under-garments, but Summerhill children would not

see anything funny in them. Six months ago I wrote a play for the Cottage children, quite a "vulgar" play about a woodcutter's son who found a hundred pound note and showed it round ecstatically to his family . . . which included the cow. The cow swallowed it, and their efforts to get the cow to drop it were in vain. Then the boy had a brilliant idea . . . they would open a booth at a fair and charge a shilling for a two minutes' entry. If the cow dropped the money during your entry you got it. The play would have brought the house down in a West End music hall. Our children took it in their stride, and the actors (six to nine year olds) saw nothing funny about it at all. One of them, a girl of eight, told me that I was silly not to use the proper words in the play . . . she meant what most people would call improper words.

Improper words! That brings us to swearing.

Swearing is of three kinds . . . Sexual, religious, excremental. In Summerhill the religious kind does not count, because the children are not taught religion. Now most children (and most adults) swear. The army is famous for what a character of Kipling's called "the adjective," and universities and clubs (not only golf clubs) have a sexual and excremental

language. Schoolboys swear secretly, and they tell dirty stories. The difference between Summerhill and a prep. school is that in the one the children swear openly, in the other secretly. It is not true that freedom to swear automatically takes all attraction away from obscene words. Our little children use such words freely and without proper context, whereas if a big boy or girl swears, a noun or adjective is used as an adult uses words, that is appropriately. Sex words are used more commonly than excrement words. Our children have no feeling that water closets are funny things, and their lack of repression about excrement makes reference to it rather dull. It is different with sex. Sex is so important a thing in life that its vocabulary covers our whole life. In its mentionable form we see it in practically every song and dance. Either My Sweetie is Going Away or You are My Heart's Delight or the Cream in my Coffee. A film story without sex will not thrive. Sex appeal takes more of the national income than books and music: cosmetics sell better than concert tickets. But we must remember that underneath its mentionable form there is always the unmentionable. Behind the bridal carriage old shoe and the rice are the "unmentionables" that these symbolise. The vogue of the risqué

story is entirely due to its unmentionableness. In a society that had no sex repressions the unmentionable would disappear. That is what is really happening in Summerhill . . . nothing is unmentionable. No one is shockable, because being shocked implies having an obscene interest in what shocks you.

Oh, but there are people who cry in horror: "What a crime to rob little children of their innocence!" Ostriches hiding their heads in the sand. Children are never innocent, thank God. They are often ignorant, and it is the depriving the child of ignorance that the ostriches fly into hysterics about. There should not be such a thing as ignorance, and the most suppressed child is never ignorant about much. His contact with other children gives him "knowledge"—that dreadful knowledge that miserable little kids give to each other in dark corners. There are no dark corners in Summerhill, and the children have a really clean attitude to life.

One would think that being freely brought up the children would run about naked in summer. They don't. Girls up to nine will go nude on a hot day, but small boys seldom do. This is puzzling when one takes into consideration the Freudian statement that boys are proud of having a penis while girls are ashamed of

not having one. Our small boys certainly do not want to exhibit themselves a lot, and the senior boys and girls never strip. In summer the boys and men wear only shorts without shirts, and the girls wear bathing dresses. There is no sense of privacy about taking baths, and only new pupils lock bathroom doors. Some of the girls take sunbaths in the field, but no boys ever think of spying on them. The boys are not Peeping Toms. Two years ago one of the men on the staff played tennis naked, but the government told him to put his pants on in case tradesmen and visitors came along the front drive. I saw Max, our English master, just before I sailed, digging a trench in the hockey field, assisted by a gang of helpers, ages from nine to fifteen, of both sexes. It was a hot day and Max had stripped. No child seemed to think anything about it.

I dislike any attempt to force nudism on children. They live in a clothed civilisation, and nudism must remain something that the law does not permit: the very fact that the law does not permit it is bound to give children a warped attitude to the human body. I have used it myself, or got one of the women staff to use it, in order to satisfy the curiosity of a small child who had a sense of sin about nakedness.

Nine years ago when we came to Leiston we had a duck pond, and in the morning I would go out and have a dip. Some of the women staff and the elder girls and a few big boys used to join me. Then we got a batch of boys from Public Schools. The girls at once began to wear bathing costumes. I asked one, a pretty Swede, why.

"These new boys," she said. "Derrick and the old boys treated it as a natural thing, but these new boys leer and gape, and, well, I don't like it."

Since then I think that the only communal nude bathing has been done during evening trips to the sea.

Do the elder boys and girls fall in love with each other? Of course they do, but pairing off is seldom seen; if it takes place it is with those of seventeen or eighteen. There is no social attempt to jeer or rag a couple, nor are chalk remarks put on the walls. The smallest children play that game sometimes, and when I came away there was a large chalked notice on the playroom outside wall . . . "James is in love with Sally." James is four, and Sally is three. But every now and again we have an epidemic of writing on W.C. walls. To a child, the W.C. is the most interesting room in any house. It seems to inspire many writers and artists . . . naturally for it is a place for "creation."

The frequent dancing is an excellent outlet for at least unconscious sex interest. I say unconscious because a girl may be a beauty, but if she is a bad dancer she will not get many partners.

We have found that girls who have just come to puberty do not run after the boys. It would appear that the unconscious homosexual component of girls lasts longer than it does with boys. They keep in their gangs, and their relations with the boys are ragging but quite friendly relations. At this age interest in the opposite sex takes an aggressive form. It does so with boys also, so that there is no natural propensity at the age of fourteen to pair off with each other. At this age the girls are jealous of their rights, and the superiority of the boys in strength and roughness makes them annoyed. It seems to be the age of the Masculine Protest.

The sex relations between boys and girls in Summerhill appear to me to be very healthy. One sex will not grow up with any illusions or delusions about the other sex. Not that Summerhill is a family and all the nice little boys and girls are brothers and sisters to each other. If that were so I'd become a rabid anti-co-educationist at once.

Last night I was reading Aldous Huxley's *Eyeless in Gaza*, and came to a horrible chapter

about a prep. school. Miserable little boys not only rag a stutterer, but also torment a boy whom they have caught masturbating. The atmosphere of that school is nauseating. The priggishness of the boys, their complete insincerity . . . they seem to be sincere only in their farting exhibitions. Farting is an attempt at sincerity, but being behind and hateful, it is a poor substitute. Children who are free have no interest in the power of the fart: I haven't heard one in Summerhill for years, but that may be because of our good feeding as much as our good freedom. And since Hot Rhythm with its farting instruments must be a sublimation of schoolboy desire for anal power, the children may be sublimating their farting interests, for they sure do love Hot Rhythm. In any co-education school farting must be less in vogue than in boys' schools, for farting has an unconscious homosexual significance.

Our juniors have an interest in the Old English word for *fæces*. They use it a lot—the ones from polite homes do, I mean homes that talk of No. 2 and "going to the House of Commons" (how appropriate a name!) Children like Anglo-Saxon words and more than one child has asked me why it is wrong to say "shit" in public but right to say "*fæces*" or "excrement." I'm

gravelled if I know. I do know that excrement is to a child a most important subject of study, and any suppression of the interest in the interests of "good form" is dangerous and stupid. Defecating to a baby is a work of creation . . . it is to many adults: many people look round with pleasure and pride when they have had a big motion. It is symbolically something of great value . . . gold, and I repeat what I wrote in another book, that burglars who defecate on the carpet after robbing the safe are not intending to add insult to injury: they are symbolically showing their guilty conscience by leaving something of value to replace what they have stolen.

Adults seldom realise that there is nothing shocking to a child in faeces and smells. It is our shocked attitude that gives the child a conscience about them. How that shocked attitude came about is guess work. Animals are unconscious of the natural functions, and the dogs and cats that automatically cover their dung with earth are doing an instinctive act that, far back, must have been necessary in dens where food had to be kept clean. Man's moral attitude to his dung may have much to do with his unnatural diet. The dung of horses and sheep and rabbits is clean stuff; you can pick up horse dung with the fingers without any disgust. The excrement of

man disgusts largely because his food is such a nasty hash of artificial products. When I was a boy I remember that we all had bouts of diarrhoea, especially in hot weather, but Summerhill children never have those bouts because their diet is balanced and roughage-forming. It is possible that if mankind began to live solely on fruits and vegetables and raw grain the anal complex would almost disappear.

One persistent criticism of Summerhill is that the children swear. It is true that they swear . . . if saying Old English words is swearing. It is true that any new pupil will swear more than is necessary, and at our meetings a girl of thirteen who came from a convent was always being charged with shouting out the word "bugger" when she went bathing. It was impressed on her that she only did it when bathing, and that therefore she was swanking. As one boy put it: "You are just a silly little twerp. You want to swank in front of outside people and show that Summerhill is a free school, and you just do the opposite; you make people down on the school."

In a P.L. I explained to her that she was really trying to do the school harm because she hated it.

"But I don't hate Summerhill," she cried.  
"It's a topping place."

“Yes,” I said, “it is, as you say, a topping place, but you aren’t in it. You are still living in your convent, and you have brought all the hate of the convent and the nuns with you. You identify Summerhill with the hated convent, and it isn’t really Summerhill you are trying to damage; it is the convent.”

But she went on shouting out her buggers until Summerhill became a real place to her and not a symbol. It is the floating population that makes swearing a social difficulty in Summerhill. Not that the old pupils are saintly in mouth, but the old-timers swear at the right time, so to speak. They use conscious control.

Children accept swearing as a natural language. Adults condemn it because their obscenity is greater than that of children. Only an obscene person will condemn obscenity. Parents must ask themselves the question:—Shall I allow my children to swear openly, or shall I leave them to be obscene in dirty dark corners like the boys in Huxley’s novel? There is no half-way house. The hush hush way leads to the adulthood of tiresome commercial traveller stories and music-hall innuendoes, that is to an obscene repressive state. The open way leads to a clear clean interest in all life. At a venture I say that our old boys and girls have the cleanest minds in England.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MANNERS

THE enquiring mother sometimes expresses a grave doubt. . . . "If I send my son here won't he behave like a barbarian when he comes home for holidays?"

My answer is: "Yes, if you have made him a barbarian already."

It is true that the spoiled child coming to Summerhill goes home as a barbarian for at least the first year. If he has been brought up with manners he will regress to barbarism every time . . . which only shows how little manners sink into a child. They are the first layer to be dropped under freedom. New children generally show marvellous manners, that is they behave insincerely. That in Summerhill they come to have good manners is a tribute to the goodness of childhood, for we ask for no manners at all, not even a Thank You or a Please.

Again and again visitors say: "But their manners are delightful!" Peter, who was with us from the age of eight to nineteen, has just gone to South Africa. His hostess writes: "Everyone here is charmed with his good manners," yet I

was quite unconscious of whether he had any manners or not when he was with us. Clearly this business of manners should be looked into.

Firstly let us distinguish between manners and etiquette. Manners are unconscious, but etiquette is conscious. On this ship I should call the behaviour good etiquette rather than good manners. We dress for dinner; we rise when a lady approaches our table; we say excuse me when we rise from a table (God knows why). It is all outer, meaningless behaviour. A Scot and his wife who sit at my table: they and I show real good manners. The dinner bugle goes at seven, and we sit down promptly, but many of the rich people on board do not begin to dress till after the final *Roast Beef of Old England* has been played for dinner, that is they unthinkingly keep the tired stewards up till late at night. Manners are thinking of others, no, feeling for others. You must be socially conscious to have good manners. Scots, for some obscure reason, have better manners than the English, and the equality a Glasgow teashop lassie shows when she discusses the weather with you is one of good manners. Scots are poorer than the English, and it is among the poor that manners flourish. (The etiquette of the rich is a protection of their possessions, but the manners of the poor are the expression of a

love for one's fellows. A classless society would not need etiquette, but it would have manners.)

Now Summerhill is a classless society. The wealth and position of your father does not count. What counts is your personality. And what counts for most is your sociability, your being a good member of the community. Our good manners spring from our self-government, for in self-government you are constantly being compelled to see the other person's point of view. It is unthinkable that any Summerhill child would mock a stammerer or jeer at one who was lame, yet prep. school boys sometimes do both . . . boys who say Please, and Thank You and Excuse me, sir. Manners are a matter of sincerity. When Jack went to the engineering works he found that the man who gave out nuts and bolts was always in a vile temper. Jack thought it over and came to the conclusion that the trouble was this: The men would go up and shout: "Hoy, Bill, chuck over some Whitworth half-inch nuts." But Bill wore a coat and collar, and Jack concluded that he must feel himself a cut above the ordinary mechanics in overalls, and his bad temper was due to his not getting the respect he deserved. So when Jack needed bolts or nuts he went up to Bill and said: "Excuse me, Mr. Brown, I need nuts and bolts."

Said Jack to me: "It wasn't boot-licking

on my part. It was just a useful use of your pet psychology. I was sorry for the bloke."

"What was the result?" I asked.

"Oh," said Jack, "surprising . . . I am the only chap in the works he is civil to."

I call that an excellent example of the manners that a community life gives to boys. Thinking of, feeling for others.

I never notice bad manners amongst the small children, no doubt because I do not look for them. Yet I have never seen a child rush in between two visitors who were talking together. They never knock at my sitting-room door, but if I have visitors they simply retire quietly, often saying: "Sorry." A good compliment to their manners was recently given by Watson, who comes to see us often and always in a different car, for his trade is selling used cars. He said to me: "I've come here with cars for the last three years, and never once has a kid scratched a wing or attempted to enter a car . . . and this is the school where the kids are alleged to break windows all day long."

I have already mentioned their friendliness to visitors. This friendliness might be classed as good manners, for I have never heard the most antagonistic visitor complain of being molested in any way by any pupil who has been

six months in the school. Our theatre performances are marked by excellent audience manners always. Even a bad turn or play is applauded more or less . . . naturally less, but the general feeling is that the actor or dramatist has done his or her best, and should not be censured or despised.

In the dining-room etiquette is not a strong point. Feeding is so intensive and instinctive an affair that children become more or less unconscious when tucking in. Table manners come later, come without forcing or encouragement. Parents who are strict at table simply give children hate complexes about food, and it is possible that the complexes children often have about certain foods are linked up with silly parental ideas of table manners. A child should have the same choice of food that an adult has; he should never be forced to eat what he doesn't like. In Summerhill we always give even the smallest child complete freedom to choose from the daily menu, and we always have a choice of three middle-course dishes at dinner. One result is, of course, that we have less wastage than most schools have, but that is not our motive: we want to save the child rather than the food.

Our dining-room is a noisy place. Children, like animals, are loud at meal times. We only allow visitors without noise complexes to dine with us.

Here I confess to cowardice, for my wife and I dine alone, but then my wife and I spend about two hours a day serving out their dinner. Well, to be frank, I used to take my part, but on discovering that Eyre, the maths. master, carves better than I do, I maledicted my way out of the daily carving.

Jealousy is something that has to be guarded against in the dining-room. Even some of the staff are jealous when visitors receive any special dish, and if the cook gives one senior pupil asparagus the others will wax eloquent about kitchen favourites. Food is the most important thing in a child's life, much more important than sex. This is natural, sex is something that has contact with the outside world. The sex organs are the only part of the body that requires another for fulfilment, so that all social feelings originate in the sexual organs. The stomach is ego-centric, selfish, and children have not the urge to extreme social contact because their sex organs are not developed. Egoism belongs to childhood, and when allowed freedom to live itself out this egoism gradually becomes altruism. The boy often is far more possessive about his plate of mutton than the old tribal chief was about his women. The psychology of the child must be sought for in his guts. Naturally, for feeding comes first in life.

The sucking child has two desires, one for

food, the other for the sexual pleasure of mother's breast. After weaning the second pleasure is side-tracked, not annihilated: it lives on in the unconscious awaiting the time when the development of the sex organs will give it a fresh start, but a new kind of start, one that will require love of another to fulfil its purpose. Thus every man's wife is his mother, for it is the original desire for the pleasure of mother's breast that goes into sex desire. In the woman the original wish takes another form. She remains the mother, and her breasts remain a sexual zone, and her man becomes her baby. A woman always unconsciously identifies herself with her mother. Groddeck says that every mother has a decided sexual pleasure when her babe suckles. Why not? Sexual pleasure is bodily pleasure, and rationalise as we will, we cannot escape the fact that our bodies are the main parts of ourselves. Eating is as much a sexual pleasure as intercourse is, and in childhood it is the greatest pleasure of all. It is therefore too fundamental, too vital to be marred and perverted by table manners. The sad truth is that the children in Summerhill who have the worst table manners are those who have been brought up genteelly. The more Rolls-Roycey the home, the worse the table manners . . . and all other manners.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE THEATRE

SUMMERHILL theatre is a converted squash-rackets court. It holds about a hundred people, and its stage, designed by Paxton Chadwick, is a movable one, that is it is made of boxes that can be piled up into steps and platforms. It has proper lighting with home-made dimming devices and spot lights. There is no scenery, only grey curtains, and when the cue is "enter villagers through gap in hedge" they push the curtain aside.

The tradition of the school is that only plays written in the school are performed. Not all the staff and children write plays, and not all take part in the acting. Sunday night is our theatre night, and I have seen six successive Sunday nights with full programme. But sometimes after a wave of dramatics there will not be a performance for a few weeks. At the end-of-term celebrations we always have a triple bill programme. I always write the Cottage play myself, and one day I may publish a volume of these plays . . . if the general public would stand their "vulgarity." Paxton and May

Chadwick sometimes give us plays, but the unwritten code is that a staff play is performed only if there is a dearth of children's plays. Our children never do what Dora Russell's do, they never write a communal play. And girls write more than boys. Small boys often produce their own plays, but usually the parts are not written out: they hardly need to be, for the main line of each character is: "Stick em up!" In these plays the curtain is always rung down on a set of corpses, for small boys are by nature thorough and uncompromising.

Daphne, a girl of thirteen, used to give us Sherlock Holmes plays. I remember one about a constable who ran away with the sergeant's wife. With the aid of the sleuth and of course My Dear Watson, the sergeant tracked the wife to the constable's lodgings. There a remarkable sight met their eyes, for the constable lay on a sofa with his arm round the faithless wife, while a bevy of demi-monde women danced sinuous dances in the middle of the room. *The constable was in evening dress.* Daphne always brought high life into her dramas.

Other girls of fourteen give us plays, sometimes in verse, and these are often good. The cast makes its own costumes, and this side of the drama is exceptionally well done.

There is a strong aversion to plagiarism, and when, some time ago, a play fell out of the programme and I had to write one hastily as a stop-gap, I wrote a play on a hint from one of W. W. Jacob's stories, there was an outcry of Copy Cat! Swindler! The children do not like dramatised stories at all. Nor do they want the usual high-brow stuff so common in other schools. Our crowd never acts Shakespeare . . . but I sometimes write a Shakespeare skit, as, for example, Cæsar with an American gangster setting, with the language a mixture of Shakespeare and the *Black Mask Magazine*. Mary brought the house down when as Cleopatra she stabbed everyone on the stage, and then, looking at the blade of her knife, read the words Stainless Steel, and plunged it into her breast. I also did *Hamlet* as rewritten by Shakespeare and Edgar Wallace in collaboration . . . with Freud as psychological adviser. So it came about that in one of my comic exams. later a small boy in answer to the question: Who was Hamlet? answered: "A chap in Neill's play." Possibly because I am in the way of being a humorist, our school drama tends towards comedy and farce rather than towards tragedy, but when we do have tragedy it is well done, sometimes beautifully done.

The acting ability of the school is of a high standard, and there is not such a thing as stage fright. The Cottage children are a delight to see: they live their parts with complete sincerity. Again the girls act more readily than the boys, indeed boys under ten seldom act at all except in their own gangster plays. The older boys and girls act well, although some never act and have no desire to act. We discovered in our long experience that the worst actor is he who acts in life: such a child can never get away from himself and is self-conscious on the stage, but self-conscious is the wrong term, for it means being conscious that others are conscious of you.

Every programme has dances in it. These are always arranged and performed by the girls. They do them well, and I have seen worse dances on the London stage. They do not dance to classical music; it is always a jazz record. We had one ballet to Gerschwin's *An American in Paris* music. I made the story and the girls interpreted it in dance.

I used to think that either one is born an actor or not, I am not quite so sure now. There is Virginia who is a born actress, but there is Edna who was a bad actress and is getting better and better each performance. As a comedy actress she is great.

Acting is a necessary part of education. It is largely exhibitionism, but when there is only exhibitionism you are hissed off the stage, or are likely to be. You must have a strong power of identifying yourself with others. With adults this identification is never unconscious: they know that they are play-acting, but I question if small children do. Quite often when a child enters and his cue is: "Who are you?" instead of answering: "I am the abbey ghost," he will answer: "I'm Peter."

In one of the Cottage plays there was a dinner scene with real viands. It took the prompter some time and concern to get the actors to move on to the next scene: they were tucking in with complete indifference to the audience.

The Sunday night theatre is always well-attended. The audience is not too critical, but it behaves well . . . much better than most London audiences do. We seldom have cat calls and feet thumping and whistling.

Acting is one method of finding self-confidence, but some children who never act tell me that they hate the performances because they feel so inferior. That is a difficulty for which there is no solution. The child generally finds another line in which he can find superiority. The difficult case is that of the girl who loves acting

but can't act. It says much for the good manners of the school that such a girl is seldom left out of a cast. Boys and girls of thirteen and fourteen refuse to take any part that involves making love, but the small children will play any part easily and gladly. Over fifteen the seniors will play love parts if they are comedy parts, and only one or two will take a serious love part. Love parts cannot be well played until one has experienced love, but children who have never known grief in real life may act splendidly in a sorrow part. I have seen Virginia break down at rehearsals and weep while playing a sad part. That is accounted for by the fact that every child has known grief in imagination, and death enters into every child's phantasies. Plays for children ought to be at their level. It is wrong to make them do classical plays which are far divorced from their real phantasy life. Their plays, like their reading, should be of their age. Summerhill children never read Scott or Dickens or Thackeray, because they belong to an age of cinema. In the film they get a story as long as *Westward Ho* in a picture of an hour and a quarter, a story without all the dull descriptions of people and landscapes. So in their plays they do not want a story of Elsinore: they want a story of their own environment.

Last winter I read a play to the seniors once a week. I read all Barrie, Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekov, some of Shaw and Galsworthy, and some modern plays like *The Silver Cord*, *The Vortex*, *Hindle Wakes*. Our best actors and actresses liked Ibsen and the general opinion was that Barrie's *Dear Brutus* was a splendid example of stage playmaking technique. They are interested in stage technique and take an original view of it. There is a time-honoured trick in playwriting, the trick of never allowing a character to go off the stage without his making an excuse for doing so. When a dramatist wanted to get rid of the father so that the wife and daughter could tell each other what an ass he was, old father obligingly got up, and, remarking: "Well, I'd better go and see if the gardener has planted those cabbages," he shuffled out. Our young playwrights have a more direct technique. As one girl said to me: "In real life you go out of a room without saying anything about why you are going." You do, and you do on the Summerhill stage too.

It is the creative side of a school theatre that is the vital one. Our theatre has done more for creation than anything else in the school. The children must realise, even if dimly, that their tradition of only inside plays being performed

is one that encourages creation and not reproduction alone. Anyone can act a play, but everyone cannot write a play.

The establishment of the theatre has almost done away with a branch of dramatic art that had its values. Before we made the theatre our acting was done in the school lounge, and we had plays only at the end of term. During the term we used to have what we called lounge nights, and we did a lot of spontaneous acting. Two or three children would get up a play or a charade on the spot, and when ideas failed I used to give acting exams. These were all done without props. "Put on an imaginary overcoat; take it off again and hang it on a peg." "Pick a bunch of flowers and find a thistle among them." "Step in dog dung on the street." "Open a telegram that tells you your father (or mother) is dead." "Take a hasty meal at a junction restaurant and be on tenterhooks lest the trains leave without you."

Sometimes the acting would be a talkie. I would sit down at a table and announce that I was an Immigration Officer at Harwich. Each child must have an imaginary passport and be prepared to answer my questions. That was good fun. Again I would be a Film Producer interviewing a prospective cast, or a business

man seeking a secretary. Once I was a man who had advertised for an amanuensis. None of the children knew what the word meant. One girl acted as if it meant manicurist and this afforded some good comedy.

Another game we had was conversations. Two people would sit down and begin to talk to each other as strangers. Sometimes we took each apart and gave them a line to say, the game being that the one who could bring in the line naturally and first was the winner. This was, on the whole, too difficult for them. I think it a pity that the spontaneous acting dropped out, and its revival would be worth while. It may have dropped because I found it so difficult to think out new stunts, for the children could not help me there. So that in that respect it was bad: it depended too much on my fertility of imagination.

## CHAPTER X

### GAMES AND SPORTS

**I**N the sport department Summerhill proves that my influence does not count for too much. I have never been keen on games (I am writing this book partly with the view to dodging deck tennis and quoits I fear), and have taken no active part in Summerhill games, so that no one can say that the Summerhill keenness on games has anything to do with me.

In most schools sport is compulsory, and even the watching of matches is compulsory. In Summerhill games are, like lessons, optional. One boy has been ten years in the school and hasn't played a game, and has never been asked to play a game. But most of them love games. The juniors do not organise games. They play gangsters or Red Indians; they build branch huts and keep house and sell sand and do all the things that small children usually do. Not having reached the co-operative stage they should not have games organised for them. These come naturally at the right time.

Our chief games are hockey in the winter and tennis in the summer. The staff plays in the

hockey team, and because of this we play, not schools, but adult clubs in the surrounding towns. Our team goes as far as Yarmouth and Lowestoft. It holds its own, and often comes home the victor. Its standard of play is good and it is jealous of its reputation for sportsmanship. When one ex-pupil playing in a match was accused, in a general meeting, of rough play, public opinion was strongly against him, and he reformed his play accordingly. His excuse that he only started barging when the other side began it was not considered a defence. I know that our hockey team is respected all over East Suffolk as a good sporting crowd.

The girls do not take part in a match—say—against Lowestoft Town, a man's team, but they play against mixed teams or in any school matches. They also play in all practice games.

Our tennis is, if anything, better than our hockey. No, I fear that the hockey team won't allow that statement. But the tennis is good and the players very keen. My wife has a first-class style, and she coaches them well: you never see a jabby little stroke in Summerhill, for we specialise in good follow throughs. When we play schools we win easily, but we generally lose to adult teams, although on the Saturday before I came away

doubles. One difficulty with children is to get good team work in doubles. Team work they take for granted in hockey, but often two tennis players act as individuals instead of as a single unit. Unity comes more easily about the age of seventeen.

Cricket has never been a Summerhill game because we have no cricket field, and we cannot use our hockey field for cricket. We only get as far as nets, but even so we won two matches locally this year.

Football is not an organised game with us either. That may be because it is not a game for girls, although if the boys wanted it they wouldn't consider the girls. A ball is kicked about sometimes, but there is no football team. One or two of our boys play for the local youths' team, just as others play for the local cricket team.

Swimming is very popular with all ages. We are two miles from the sea at Sizewell, and all the seniors cycle to bathe in good weather. We send the Cottage juniors down to the sea in a charabanc. Most of the seniors are good swimmers, and the small children pick it up easily. A fixed rule is that no one may bathe without the presence of two appointed life-savers, for the beach at Sizewell goes in comparatively suddenly. It is not a good beach for children, for the tide seems always to be full, and the long

stretches of sand with rocks and pools so dear to children are not to be found on the east coast.

Boxing is a favourite sport with the boys. Every now and then we have a holiday visitor, Johnny Rust, the welter weight champion of South Africa. He teaches the noble art, and some of his pupils can now put up a good show with the gloves. I have always been interested in boxing myself, and consider it an excellent training for any boy.

We have no artificial gymnastics in the school, nor do I think them necessary. The children get all the exercise they need in their games and swimming and dancing and cycling (they cycle a lot). I question if free children would go to a gym. class. We have a gym., so-called, with ropes and swings and ladders. The smaller children use them on wet days, but the seniors seldom go into the gym.

Our indoor games are table tennis, chess, cards, bagatelle, and the Carriage boys have made a billiard room in their bungalow and are now waiting for me to buy them a table.

At the Cottage the children have two chutes for sliding down into sand, a paddling pool, a sand pit and a jungle gym. (home-made and never extended because the children do not use it much). The sand pit is always filled with grubby children on a warm day, and the Cottage is always complaining that the bigger children

come and use their sandpit. It appears that we shall have to have a sand pit for the seniors or the semi-seniors also. The sand and mud-pie era lives on longer than we thought it did.

When I was fresher at the job I used to give an occasional treasure hunt with cryptic clues, but I seem to have too much to do nowadays. I used to hide a shilling in the grounds and post up a chart in the proper old salt lingo written, of course, with the pirate's blood. I forget what the clues were like, and only remember that Derrick solved the direction which said the treasure was ten paces north-east of the door of the house that was the colour it wasn't . . . the greenhouse which was painted white. It is good for children to have someone to give them exciting things to do, but it is not necessary: the things that they find to do themselves are best for them. Thus it comes that no Summerhill teacher will ever advise a child what to do: he will only assist a child who asks for technical information about how a thing is done.

The Public Schools claim that they produce sportsmen. That is the only point of resemblance between them and Summerhill. We produce sportsmen, too, but they don't have an Old School Tie. Our boys disprove the usual criticism that co-education makes boys soft and effeminate. And

incidentally I note that most of our boys seem to grow to be six foot three, even when their parents are comparatively small. There may be nothing in it, but of course it may be that freedom to grow in grace means also freedom to grow in inches. Certainly I have seen boys grow more rapidly after the masturbation verbot had been proved to them to be a bogie with no substance behind it.

The only occasion on which the pupils ask for radio is that on which some sporting event is being broadcast—the Boat Race, Wimbledon Tennis Tournament, a boxing match, but they never listen in to a description of a soccer or rugger match. The only other radio they will listen to is a Hot Rhythm band. Lectures and radio lessons they have no interest in, but a good radio play generally has a good audience, and in the opinion of our seniors there have been only two good radio plays, *The Squirrel's Cage* and *The Flowers are not for you to Pick*, both by Tyrone Guthrie. I heartily agree.

We have had debates and wranglings about our inconsistency in giving prizes for sport. Every summer we have a tennis tournament and the winners are rewarded. Our inconsistency lies in our resolutely refusing to introduce prizes or marks into our school curriculum, and we are sometimes asked why it is right to give a prize for tennis but wrong to give one for geography.

We also give prizes for dances at the end of term festival, and in our athletic sports each item has its prizes—1st, 2nd and 3rd. It is a good question . . . why should I get a prize for winning the high jump and get no prize for being the best at German? I cannot give a ready answer. All I know is that children want prizes for games and they don't want them for school subjects, at least not in Summerhill. The argument against rewards is that anything should be done for its own sake, not for the reward. That is indeed true, and if this ship that I am on had a tango competition and I won it I should not feel prouder if the Purser handed me a box of cigarettes and my partner a box of chocolates, whereas a young couple might like to have a tangible token of achievement. I simply cannot reason this out. The fact is that rewards for sport came naturally in Summerhill, while rewards for schoolwork didn't. Rewards in sport give heartaches and inferiority aches to the unsuccessful, but competition without the rewards would do the same. That cannot be helped: that is life itself, for competition should be the rule of sport even when competition in profit-making will have been abolished. Even under Communism a tennis player must have an opponent. In Summerhill, at any rate, we do

not make our games "blues" heroes. Because Fred is captain of the hockey team and an excellent centre forward his voice has no special weight in a general meeting. A sportsman is admired in Summerhill, but he is not made a tin god. True the boys would rather have Perry visit the school than Bernard Shaw, but that is as it should be. Sport in Summerhill is in its proper place, but a boy who never plays a game is never looked down upon and never considered an inferior. Live and let live is a motto that finds its ideal expression when children are free to be themselves. I have but little interest in sport, but I am keenly interested in the good sportsmanship of the whole school. I conjecture that if I had been a he-man rugger forward sort of a fellow with a strenuous, persuasive way . . . "Come on, lads, get on the field!" . . . sport in Summerhill would have become a perverted thing, for only under freedom to play or not to play can we get the best sportsmanship. On this ship there is a breezy extravert who has taken on the games, and I see him going round commanding people to take their places for tournaments. Most of them seem to have one aim in life—to avoid the games organiser. . . . I do it most effectively because when he comes I type most feverishly and he sighs and leaves me to it.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE WEAR AND TEAR OF FREEDOM

I HAVE suggested more than once in these pages that the adults in Summerhill are no paragons of virtue. We are human like everyone else, and our human frailties often come into conflict with our theories. An example is that of property. I have often said and written that parents seem to value their property more than they value their children, giving the illustration of how fuss is made if a chair is scratched or a plate broken. But in my own case I find that I sometimes put possession first. If a maid or a child drops a pile of plates I say nothing and my wife says nothing. Accidents are accidents. But if a child borrows a book and leaves it out in the rain my wife gets angry, because books mean much to her. In such a case I am indifferent, for books have little value for me. On the other hand, my wife seems vaguely surprised when I make a fuss about a ruined chisel, for I value tools and they mean nothing to her. The only member of the staff who seems to have no possessive sense about things is Max, the English

Master: he allows the children to use and abuse every possession he has got, even his motorcycle . . . but he has bought a big farm, and I mean to hire a gang to steal a row of his potatoes just to see how he reacts.

My wife and I are in a special and peculiar position with regard to possessions. Our only home is the school, and there we have hardly any privacy. Our sitting-room adjoins the lounge, and we have to listen to every scrap and every painful dance record through the wall. And there is always a noise, for children are naturally noisy. Luckily we have grown accustomed to noise, and we are seldom conscious of it. Still, by the end of the term we are both rather tired not only of noise but also of the constant attention demanded from us. Our life is one of giving all the time, and visitors wear us out more than the children do, for they also want us to give: seldom, if ever, do we have a visitor who has something to give us, and when we do have a visit from one of the parents, J. D. Bernal, the brilliant Cambridge scientist, we are greatly cheered, for "Sage," as we call him, has so much to give us. Visitors behave very much as children do. Recently one lady sat herself down and said: "I hope you have the afternoon to spare, Mr. Neill, because I am sure you

will be interested in the story of my life." I have been criticised for mentioning myself so much in my books, but it is my only chance to do so, for in daily life I cannot get a word in edgeways about myself. My life is one long give, and it should be. We must give to children: it may be better to give than to receive, but it certainly is more exhausting.

Hence it comes that the adults in Summerhill sometimes get annoyed. Not often, but occasionally. Children are not young adults; they are a different species. They love noise and mud; they clatter on stairs; they shout like louts: they are unconscious of furniture, and, if playing a game of touch, they would walk over the Portland Vase if it happened to be in their way, walk over it without seeing it. I once saw a normal happy girl burn holes with a red-hot poker on the walnut mantelpiece in the staff room. When challenged, she started and seemed quite surprised. "I did it without thinking," she said, and she spoke truly: her action was a symbolic one beyond the control of the conscious mind.

We must face the fact that adults are possessive and children aren't. Any living together between children and adults must result in conflict over things material. Children will mend the fire five minutes before going up to bed; they

will heap it with coals, for coals to them are only black rocks, while to me they mean a bill of £200 a year. They will leave electric lights on because they do not associate light with electricity bills, but I cannot complain about the lights; the children, in the main, are considerate, possibly because of my frequent reminders that our district has the dearest electricity in England.

Furniture to a child is non-existent. We buy old car seats and old bus seats, but in a month or two they look wrecks. Every now and again some youngster, waiting for his second helping, will while away the time by tying his fork into knots. This is a chargeable offence, but it is usually done unconsciously or at best semi-consciously. And it isn't only the school property that they neglect or destroy: their new cycles they leave out in the rain when the newness has had three weeks' vogue. Their destruction at the age of nine or ten is not meant to be evil or anti-social: it is simply because things are not real to them. When the phantasy flight is on them they take their sheets and blankets and make pirate ships in their rooms, and the sheets get black and the blankets torn in the process. And what does a dirty sheet matter when you have hoisted the black flag and fired a broadside?

Really the man who tries to give children freedom should be a millionaire, for it is not fair that the natural carelessness of children should always be in conflict with the economic factor. The argument of the disciplinarian who says that children must be compelled to respect property does not appeal to me, for it always means some sacrifice of childhood's play life. My ideal is that a child should come to a thing of his own free will and choice, and as they leave the pre-adolescent indifference to property stage children become respecters of property. Our seniors, two of them came as crooks years ago, guard our property like watchdogs . . . the ex-crooks are truly wonderful as detectives, but then they know all the tricks of the trade. When children have freedom to live out their indifference to property they have little chance of ever becoming profiteers and exploiters. If Summerhill produces a millionaire I shall consider it has failed.

Girls do not do so much destruction as boys. That is because their phantasy life does not demand pirate ships and gangster hold ups, yet to be fair to the boys the state of the girls' sitting-room is pretty bad, and I am not convinced by the girls' explanation that the wreckage is all done in scraps with the visiting boys. Girls of

ten are not so destructive as girls of fourteen . . . the most tiresome age we find. All the hate in a girl's life seems to concentrate itself in the age of fourteen.

Our general meetings, alas, show the conflict between children and adults. That is natural, for to have a community of mixed ages and to sacrifice all to the early ages would be a complete spoiling of the child. The adults make bitter complaint if a gang of seniors have laughed and talked after we have all gone to bed, for our rooms are on top of each other. Parsons complains that he spent an hour planing up a panel for the front door, went to lunch, and came back to find that Billy had converted it into a shelf. I make accusations against the boys who borrowed my soldering outfit and didn't return it. My wife makes a fuss because three small children came after supper and said they were hungry and got bread and jam . . . and Ivy found the pieces lying in the passage next morning. Corkhill reports sadly that a gang threw his precious clay at each other in the pottery. So it goes on, the fight between the adult point of view and the juvenile lack of awareness of things. But it never degenerates into personalities: there is no feeling of bitterness against the individual. This conflict keeps Summerhill very

much alive; there is always something happening, and there isn't a dull minute in the whole year. And luckily the staff is not too possessive. I myself am possessive only about certain things. It hurts me when I have bought a special tin of paint at 25s. a gallon and I find that a girl has taken it to paint an old bedstead with. I am possessive about my car and my typewriter and my workshop tools, but I have no feeling of possession about books and furniture and clothes and people. If you are possessive about people you ought not to be a schoolmaster. I had to face this issue boldly. I used to find that I was irritated when two young things fell in love, and I rationalised my emotion and thought that my irritation was really fear of awkward consequences. When I realised that it was nothing of the kind but a possessive jealousy of the young, all my irritation and fear went. I am possibly the least anxious headmaster of a co-educational school in England, but Curry, of Dartington Hall, is possibly as free from anxiety. Good lad, Curry. The damnable thing is that you have to be possessive in a possessive civilisation. Since our children will be forced by environment to be possessive why should we try to make them possessive before their time? Their job is to create, and if their

creation involves the destruction of our precious belongings we must grin and bear it, even when we do make a fuss about it.

The wear and tear of materials in Summerhill is a natural process. It could be obviated only by the introduction of fear. The wear and tear of psychic forces cannot be obviated in any way, for children ask and must be given. Fifty times a day my sitting-room door opens and a child asks a question: "Is this cinema night?" "Why don't I get P.Ls?" "Have you seen Corks?" and most common of all: "Where's Mrs. Lins?" It is all in the day's work, and I do not feel any strain therefrom, but by the end of a term my wife and I are fatigued, fatigued by three months of giving. Then there is the fatigue of showing round visitors. Every summer I become a kind of commissionnaire without uniform. Scores of times I walk with visitors . . . "This is the lab. . . . yes, we built the san. ourselves . . . and here is the theatre" . . . and so on. And most of the questions visitors ask are the same: "But how will children brought up like this fit into life?" . . . "But is it really necessary for a child to swear?" By the end of the summer term I feel like screaming if I see a strange car drive up. One of my hopes on this voyage to South Africa was that not a

soul on board would know my name. We have two days to go and only two passengers have discovered who I am, and they are kind enough to ask me no questions.

The staff, on the whole, does not get sucked dry as my wife and I do. That is because my wife and I are symbolic figures in the school. She is every child's mother; I am every child's father. In some cases we represent the ideal parents who seldom scold and never moralise, and children who have fear of their real parents haunt our sitting-room. The children of really free parents never come near us. The others are always testing us out. One boy of eleven whose father is a strict man opens my door twenty times a day, looks in, says nothing and shuts the door again. I sometimes cry to him: "No, I'm not dead yet." He has given me the love that his own father would not accept, and he has a fear that his ideal new father may disappear, a fear that covers the wish that his unsatisfactory father should disappear.

Sometimes my wife has weeks of wearing out when a spoiled little child comes new to school, especially the upper middle-class little girl of seven or eight who has had everything done for her by nurses. Such a child is a heavy burden, not only because of its demands, but

also because of its hate: every spoilt child has a hell of a lot of hate in it.

Added to all this is the working out of the transference that comes from P.Ls. If you tell a child any vital truth, or if it confides its troubles to you, he or she gets a transference, that is you get all the child's emotions showered on you. When I have cleared up a small child about birth and masturbation the transference is very strong. At one stage it may take the form of a negative transference, a hate transference, but with a normal child this does not last long, and the positive love transference soon follows it. Adult patients get the same transference, so that it is very difficult for an analyst to live with his patients. They show much jealousy of each other and each wants to monopolise the analyst's time and attention.

A child's transference breaks easily. Soon he forgets all about me and his emotions go out to things and other children. Girls naturally get a stronger transference to me than do boys, but I cannot say that a girl gets a positive and a boy a negative transference. I have had girls who showed quite a fierce hate of me for a time.

It is much easier to live with children who fear you than with children who love you, that is, you have a quieter life, for when they fear

you children give you a wide berth. My wife and I and our staff are loved by the children because we approve of them, and that is all they want. It is because they know that we will not give them disapproval that they often haunt us. Our sitting-room is filled with children nearly every night, and we often have gramophone records on the super-radiogram. Here disagreements arise. They want Duke Ellington and Ambrose and I hate the stuff. I like German foxes and tangoes (you can buy them from H.M.V. German Catalogue, a fact that few people know), and I like Ravel and Stravinsky and Gerschwin. Sometimes I lay down the law and say that since it is my room I'll play what I want to play. The *Rosenkavalier* trio or the *Meistersinger* quintet will clear the room of half the occupants, and a Brahms symphony will clear the room of all the occupants. Few children like classical music or classical paintings. Sometimes you will find a child who takes a fancy for a certain classical piece. One boy likes *Carnaval* (played by Cortot) but dislikes other pieces by Schumann. A few like Ravel's *Valse*, a lovely thing that spoils for ever one's delight in Johann Strauss's waltzes. We make no attempt to lead them to higher tastes . . . whatever higher may mean. Our view is that

every child should have the chance of hearing Duke Ellington and Pachmann. So we have no censorship of cinema-going. By seeing all films they find out for themselves what is good . . . and jolly good taste they acquire too.

On the whole, the adults in Summerhill sacrifice much for the children. We have no real private life, partly because the house is not a good one for a school, not good from the poor adult's point of view, for the children are always on top of us. Even in vacations we always have a few left, some whose homes are abroad, others who find home in a city flat too dull, others whose parents are out working all day. But those who remain behind during vacations behave nobly, for they leave us alone.

One noteworthy fact is that seldom if ever does a member of the staff lose his or her temper. I have lost mine about three times in the last nine years . . . and then I only swore a lot. That says as much for the children as for the staff. Really they are delightful children to live with, and the occasions for losing a temper are very few. If a child is free to approve of itself it will not be hateful, and it will not see any fun in trying to make an adult lose its temper. We had one woman teacher who was oversensitive to criticism, and the girls ragged her.

They could not rag any other member of the staff, because no other member would react. You can only rag people who have dignity, and we have none. Ragging in a friendly fashion they naturally do. Chad's beard comes in for its share. There is no element of wounding in their ragging; it is really an expression of love. Living with them is a full life, and the joys outweigh the annoyances so heavily that it is a happy life for adult and child.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF APPROVAL

LAST night I sat on deck and listened to a discussion on the treatment of the criminal. I took no part in the discussion, partly because I hate argument, partly because these people were talking a different language. One good lady, obviously a firm believer in the mission of the English—the civilising mission of imperialism, was of opinion that the only way to punish the criminal is to make him feel physical pain. "He should get what he gave, only more so," she said. And she looks a nice, kindly, normal person. Most of the others appeared to agree with her. Bored by the talk I rose to go to bed, and the lady said to me: "What would you do with the criminal, Mr. Neill?"

"Reward him," I said, and as I departed they all laughed at my joke.

These nice people were expressing the opinion that is held by the great majority, and this morning I have the uncomfortable feeling that my story of Summerhill must appear insane to such people . . . the general reader, and I see

that it is not fair to tell a story when the audience does not see the point of the joke. Take this question of rewarding the criminal. The usual belief is that if you give a boy a reward of sixpence for stealing your goods, he will of course steal more goods in order to get more rewards. It seems the logical thing to do, and most of us work by logic, forgetting that psycho-logic is something entirely different and something infinitely more important than mere logic. That the boy does not steal in order to get further reward proves that logic is not enough. He does not steal more, and he is likely to steal less. In fact he has an excellent chance of being cured by the reward method.

The logical person leaves out one mighty factor—the unconscious motive. In every case of juvenile stealing the child feels itself an unloved child. The theft is a symbolic attempt to get something of great value, and whether the theft is one of money or jewellery or what not the unconscious wish is to steal love. Hence when I give a boy sixpence for stealing my baccy I am aiming at his unconscious feeling, not his conscious thought. He may think that I am a mug, but what he thinks does not matter much: it is what he feels that matters, and he feels that I am his friend, his approver, one who gives him

love instead of hate. Every child feels that punishment is hate (and it is of course), and every punishment makes the child hate more and more. If you study the diehard who says: "I believe in corporal punishment. I got my share of it when I was a kid, and damme, sir, it did me a power of good": if you study this man you will always find him a hater. The final truth is that hate breeds hate and love breeds love, and no child was ever cured unless by love.

Every child is not a thief. Only the inferior child is, for the superior person earns money and the second-best person takes it away from him. Yet every child requires the same love and approval that should be given to the crook proper. Symbolically every adult is a father or mother to the child, and, every time an adult punishes, the child acquires a fear and hate of the adult behind the symbol—father or mother. That is a disturbing thought. Children are not conscious of the feeling, but I have heard a boy of thirteen say: "My last headmaster caned me a lot and I can't understand why my father and mother kept me at that school. They knew he was a cruel brute, but they didn't do anything about it."

Why do parents tolerate cruel schools? And a school can be cruel even without corporal punish-

ment. I have said before, said for years, that many parents treat their children as if they hated them. On this boat there are children who are obviously loved by their parents, but there are others who are not loved. One mother nags her daughter of ten all day long . . . "Don't go in the sun, darling . . . dearest, please keep away from that railing . . . no, love, you can't go into the swimming pool to-day: you will catch your death of cold . . ." The nagging is not a love token: it is a token of the mother's fear that covers an unconscious hate, but to be just to the poor woman it is obvious that her hate is self-hate projected on to her poor daughter. The girl fears and hates her mother, and is about as spoiled a darling as one can hope to see. For that poor kid I can see only an adult life of discontent and hate, for she gets no approval at all from her mother, and the father looks as if he could approve but fears to in his wife's presence.

You can only give a child love if you have remained a child yourself. The tragedy of adults is that they have grown up and have forgotten their childhood . . . the little girl on this boat will be glad to forget her childhood I should imagine, and her children will in turn suffer. To deal successfully with children, whether you are a parent or a teacher, you must be able to

understand their thoughts and feelings. And you must have a sense of humour—childish humour. To be humorous with a child gives the child a feeling that you love it, but the humour must never be cutting or critical. It is delightful to watch how a child's sense of humour grows. David Barton was practically born in Summerhill. When he was three I would say to him: "I'm a visitor and I want to find Neill. Where is he?" David would look at me scornfully and say: "Silly ass, you're him." But when he was seven I stopped him in the garden one day.

"Tell David Barton I want to see him," I said solemnly. "He's over at the Cottage I think."

David grinned broadly.

"Right ho," he said, and went over to the Cottage. He came back in two minutes.

"He says he won't come," he said.

"Did he give a reason?"

"Yes, he said he was feeding his tiger."

David rose to it at the age of seven, but when I told Raymond, who was nine, that he was fined half his pocket money for stealing the front door he wept, and I knew that I had made a blunder, but two years later he saw through my childish jokes.

Children have a sense of fun rather than a sense of humour. Sally, aged three, chuckles

when I meet her on the road to the town and ask her the way to Summerhill, but the girls of seven and eight react to that silly question by directing me the wrong way. When I take visitors round I usually introduce the Cottage kids as the pigs, and they grunt appropriately. But it was disconcerting lately when I introduced them as the pigs and a girl of eight said haughtily: "Isn't that joke rather stale now?" I had to admit that it was.

I cannot explain why children like to be treated with humour, unless that humour involves friendliness and smiling. It is wrong to treat a child with humour at the wrong time, and his little dignity should never be attacked. If he has a genuine grievance it must be taken seriously. Concretely, let me put it this way:—to joke with a child who has a temperature of 102 is a mistake, but when he is convalescent you can pretend to be the doctor or even the undertaker, and he will chuckle and laugh. I feel sure that much of the success of Summerhill is due to its definite sense of fun and humour. Even the seniors who practise witticisms do not use wit that bites.

Children under suppression are cruel in their jokes. I have hardly ever seen a practical joke played in Summerhill, and the ones I have

seen were usually engineered by new arrivals from prep. or Public Schools. Sometimes at the beginning of a term, when the children return from the greater suppression of home, there are teasing displays . . . hiding bicycles and so on, but these do not last over the first week. In the main the humour of Summerhill is a kindly one, and the reason for that is the sense of being loved, approved of. It proves the point that the child is born good . . . and remains good when all opportunity to hate and fear is abolished.

## CHAPTER XIII

### WHAT THE PUBLIC WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT SUMMERHILL

I WRITE this chapter in South Africa. In it I shall try to answer the many questions the people here have asked me when I lectured. Incidentally I say that I have been surprised at the enthusiasm with which I have been received. Every meeting is crowded out, and in the large towns hundreds have failed to obtain an entry to lectures. South Africa is very much alive about education, and, judging from my audiences, will tolerate the most extreme opinions; not only tolerate but enthuse over them. Of great interest to me is the fact that the men are just as enthusiastic as the women. In England when I lecture the men are in' the minority, but here the sexes are balanced. Since first I began writing on education, over twenty years ago, I have had more letters of appreciation from South Africa than from any other country. The country is alive. It has none of the hide-bound tradition of the home land, and it is forced to be alive to its modern problems. It has its English-Afrikaans

problem, not yet solved. I find a distinct cleavage between Boer and Briton. It has its vast native problem, and it thinks hard about the problem of native education. The more alert South Africans see that this problem is bound up with capitalism. So long as the native is exploited, native education is an unsolvable problem. The law is fairly equitable as between white and black in a city like Johannesburg, but from the outlying towns come terrible stories of inequality in the eyes of the law . . . stories of a farmer beating a native to death, being tried by a farmer jury, and getting fined five pounds, while a native who attacks a white man gets floggings and ten years. South Africa has an enormous fear complex about the native, for the native outnumbers the white man by five or six to one, and fear keeps the white man from allowing the native any liberty. On the Rand the native is well fed and housed, and he earns quite a good wage when his standard of living is considered, but he is treated as one who is beneath all culture and education. He cannot go out at night without a pass. Native teachers were not allowed to attend my lectures in Johannesburg, but in Boksburg the mayor, when approached on the subject, gladly gave permission for their attendance.

Hence some of the questions asked me showed the difficulties that face the South African educator. And here I must mention that the teacher in South Africa has a higher status than the teacher at home. The fact that I had to lecture in evening dress is symptomatic. And there is a pleasant lack of snobbery and class amongst teachers. My host, H. A. Jack, headmaster of Yeovil School, in Johannesburg, addresses inspectors and Union officials by their surnames, and any teacher can get the direct ear of the highest official in the education department. Teachers in the mass have a disgruntled attitude to their barracks schools, and many are keen to reform them.

But to the questions.

*Should children be taught that colour is inferior?*

We have had two coloured pupils in Summerhill, and so far as I could see the other children were unconscious of their colour. One was a bully and was disliked; the other was a likeable boy and was accepted as one of the gang. In South Africa the colour bar is possibly more economic than psychological. Imperialism exploits the native and purposely keeps him inferior. I am told that the Dutch Reformed Church (a Calvinist body of the narrowest type)

accepts the native as the Biblical descendant of the hewers of wood and drawers of water, and treats the native accordingly. The Rand mines without the exploited natives would be bad profit-makers. But the psychological aspect must be considered also. In America the negro symbolises the repressed sex of the white, a repressed sex that is over-compensated for by the beautiful manners of the American male when he is with his females. Lynching is a sexual sadistic orgy, and the black man symbolises all the repressed gross sex of the white. This must to some degree be the case in South Africa, and the hideous distinction that is made between rape by a white and rape by a black is significant. If a native rapes a white woman the law can prescribe death as a penalty, whereas if a white man rapes a native woman the chances are that a small fine will cover the damage. Also the colour bar in South Africa has a deep fear basis. I think that Russia would have solved the native question by this time if South Africa had been a Turkestan.

*If a child is doing something dangerous at Summerhill do you allow him to do it?*

Of course not. People so often fail to understand that freedom for children does not mean

being a fool about children. We do not allow our little children to decide what food they will eat, or when they shall go to bed. We guard them against dangers from motors or broken glass or airguns or deep water. You should never give a child responsibility that he is not ready for. But remember that half the dangers that children encounter are due to bad education. The child who is dangerous with fire is one who was forbidden to know the truth about fire by being allowed to burn himself a little.

*You say that creation is better than possession, yet when you allow a child to create, the thing he makes is a possession and he will overvalue it. What about it?*

The fact of the matter is that he doesn't. When I paint a picture or make a brass bowl I have a possessive attitude to it for about a month. After that I can give it away easily. A child values what he makes for about a day or a week. A child's natural sense of possession is weak . . . he will leave his new cycle out in the rain. He will leave his clothes lying about anywhere. {The joy is in the making, and the true artist has no interest in his work when it is finished. No work of art ever pleases its creator, because his aim is perfection.} If I could make a perfect brass tray I'd lose interest in brasswork.

*Why does a girl of eight stammer in her mother's presence?*

Stammering is very often an attempt to gain time in order to avoid betraying oneself in speech. When I get a difficult question in lecturing I try to hide my ignorance and confusion by beginning with: "Well . . . er . . . hm . . ." The child in question appears to be afraid of her mother, and I suspect the mother of being a moralist. I found that one small boy's stutter was due to his trying to hide the fact that he masturbated and felt guilty about it. The cure was to convince him that masturbation wasn't a sin.

*What is your policy with a child brought up in a sincerely religious home? Do you allow it to practise religion?*

Yes, the child can practise religion without having any adverse comments made by staff or pupils, but I find that no child wants to practise religion when he is free. Some new pupils go to church for a few Sundays and then they cease going. Church is too dull. I see no signs that worship is a natural thing in children, and when the sense of sin is washed out prayer is never used. Generally children from a religious home are insincere and repressed. That is

inevitable under a religious system that has lost its original love of life and concentrates on its fear of death.) (No child can love God, for no child can love anyone: it can only want to be loved. You can give a child fear of the Lord and that is all, a fear of the Lord that is the source of unhappiness and neurosis. (Children do not need a religion because their life is a spiritual creative one.)

*Why do so many adults express gratitude to a strict master of their childhood?*

Conceit mostly. The man who gets up at a meeting and says: "I was thrashed as a kid and it did me a hell of a lot of good," is virtually saying: "Look at me. I'm a success in spite of, even because of my early thrashings." (And a slave does not really want freedom; /He is incapable of appreciating freedom. Outside discipline makes men slaves, inferiors, masochists) They hug their chains. Safety First is a phrase that surely was coined by a man who thanked God that his teachers had given him it in the neck.

*What do you think is the psychology of Judas Iscariot?*

The question has hardly a bearing on the conduct of Summerhill, but it is worth answering.

Judas loved Jesus possibly in a passionate way. Jesus loved the gentle John. Jealousy compelled Judas to betray his Lord . . . with a kiss, the token of love, as Homer Lane used to point out. Jesus went to heaven, and immediately the conscience-stricken Judas killed himself, not as a self-punishment so much as a means of getting to Jesus before the rival John arrived. Stekel applies very much the same theory to Brutus and Cæsar. He holds that Brutus fulfilled Wilde's truth that every man kills what he loves.

*In your school government is there competition for government posts? If so is this a cause of jealousy?*

Being on the government is so strenuous a life that there is no competition for office. On the contrary only the most advanced pupils will take on social duties. Even when the government members were paid officials there was no competition for offices.

*Would you reprove a boy of fourteen for telling sex stories?*

Of course not. I should tell him better ones than he knew. Most adults tell sex stories . . . as a student I got some of my best ones from a clergyman . . . and to condemn an interest

in sex stories is sheer hypocrisy and cant. (The sex story is the direct result of sexual repression.) It lets off the steam that the doctrine of sex-sin bottles up. Under a free outlook on sex the sex story would almost die a natural death . . . almost, not quite, because sex is a fundamental interest.

*Do you practise Christ's teachings?*

Some years ago we had the child of a lay preacher. One Sunday night when we were all dancing he shook his head.

"Neill," he said, "it is a wonderful place this, but why, oh why, are you such pagans?"

"Brown," I answered, "you spend your life standing on soap boxes telling people to be saved. (You talk about salvation. We do salvation.)"

We do not consciously follow Christ's teachings, but from a broad point of view Summerhill is about the only school in England that treats children in a way that Christ would have approved of. In South Africa to-day a friend pointed to a large Roman Catholic school and said: "My God, Neill, the canings that go on in there!" Calvinist ministers in South Africa beat their children, just as the Calvinists of Scotland beat their children in the past. In

Summerhill we give children love and approval. I think that we are about the only true Christians in the world . . . outside Russia which, of course, is the only really Christian country left. That is why it abolished its churches.

*What would you do with a child who plays truant?*

In Pretoria I answered: "Shoot his head-master."

*What do you do with a child who won't take its medicine?*

I don't know . . . we never have a child who won't take its medicine. If a child refused I don't think we should worry much, for medicine is a doubtful benefit. I question if medicine ever cured anything. I look on children's illnesses as spring-cleanings, and if I were in charge of sick children I would see to it that the sweeping (cold, measles, scarlatina, whooping-cough) took its natural course.

I believe the Nature Cure people are right when they apply to physical disease the same method that we apply to psychical disease. Just as a buried wish should be lived out, so should a buried poison be allowed to find its way out.

When a child has a temperature we always make it fast on orange juice and water until the temperature is normal. The children

complain, but we are adamant about it. Our feeding is so balanced that illness is not one of our school pests.

*Under Summerhill system how does a child's will power develop? If allowed to do what he pleases how can self-control develop?*

This question (a common one) shows how difficult it is to grasp the whole idea of Summerhill. A child is not allowed to do as he pleases. His own laws hedge him in on all sides. He is allowed to do as he pleases in all things that affect him and him only; he can play all day if he wants to, because working is a matter that concerns him alone, but he is not allowed to play a cornet in the Maths' room because his playing interferes with others.

But what, after all, is will power? The quality that Mussolini has? Or the power that makes a man give up smoking? (To me the will is the deep unconscious, the ID.) There is no Free Will, because what we will consciously is not of the greatest importance. I can "will" myself to give up tobacco, but I cannot will myself to fall in love with Greta Garbo, nor will myself to like botany. No man can will himself to be good, or, for that matter, bad. He may do the latter by invoking the help of God because

God is the ID, the unconscious life-force. The cures claimed by the Salvation Army and the Oxford Group are cases of the unconscious will being released under the symbol of God.

You cannot train a person to have a strong will, but if you educate children in freedom they will be more conscious of themselves, (for freedom allows more and more of the unconscious to become conscious.) That is why most Summerhill children have no doubts about life: they know what they want, and I guess they will get it too. Remember also that what is called a weak will is usually a sign of lack of interest. The "weak" person who is easily persuaded to play tennis when he has no desire to play tennis, is a person who has no ideas of what his interests really are, and a slave discipline system encourages such a person to remain weak-willed and rather futile.

*What is the cause of excessive worry about work, and why do so many young people commit suicide nowadays?*

I question if any child has ever worried about work. The apparent worry has a deeper source, and almost invariably it is one arising from a sense of sin about masturbation. Children who have no guilt about masturbation are usually bright and keen in their work.

I imagine that the second part of the question

deserves the same answer. As Stekel says: Suicide is the last sexual act. The masturbation verbot is one that causes a child to hate its body and its soul, and suicide is a logical reaction. If the body is so vile the sooner it is got rid of the better. But there is a social aspect too. Before 1914 the world was safe, but since the war everyone has had the vague knowledge that the world is on the edge of a volcano. (Wars and revolutions are not far off, and the young feel that death may come soon. So youth eats, drinks, and is merry, for to-morrow it may die.) But because it eats, drinks, and is merry the voice of morality tells it that it should die as a penalty. (Suicide is a return to mother's womb, to possession and security.) It is the Nemesis of an uncreative life. I make the guess that suicide is not very widespread in a creative civilisation like that of Russia.

*What do you do when a young child contracts the smoking habit?*

A child has no natural appetite for smoking, and if he smokes it is because he wants to be grown up. Owing to the inferiority complex that a child's small size gives him, he tends to identify himself with adults. Thus nearly every new pupil begins to smoke in Summerhill when he finds that he is free to do so. But the smoking

does not last more than a day or two, and the child returns to something more enticing . . . his sweets. Some of the eldest pupils smoke, but others never smoke at all.

*What do you do with a child who is obstinate and sulks?*

I don't know. I never see one. There is no occasion for obstinacy when a child is free. Defiance in a child is always the fault of the adult. If your attitude to a child is a love one you will do nothing to make him obstinate. An obstinate child has a "grouse," and my job would be to find out what was at the root of the grouse. I should guess a feeling that he has been treated unjustly at home.

*What is your definition of a moralist?*

This question was asked by a Roman Catholic priest who was obviously angry. Forgetting that I might have Catholics in my audience I had spoken of the most difficult children we ever have to deal with in Summerhill—the girls from convents, who have so much repression to live out. The priest got up to attack me rather than to ask a question. My reply was: "A moralist is one who erroneously thinks he knows what is good and what is evil and makes a standard of

right and wrong for another." He at once jumped up and contradicted. I could not hear him very well, but gathered that to him a moralist was one who taught others according to virtue, but as I have no clear idea of what virtue means I did not argue with him. But I asked him if he would answer a question of mine. He agreed, and I asked: "Do you believe that God made man in his own image?" He said he did. "Then why," I asked, "can't I walk down a street in Kimberley without my clothes on?" The priest was a clever lad, and his answer came pat . . . "God did not make man in his physical image but in the image of his soul." A good answer, and I thought of continuing by asking him why, if the soul were good, the body that contained the soul was vile, but I refrained because it is hopeless to argue with a man when you are each speaking a different language. His church allows beating of children: my religion does not. His church makes a child take a bath with a robe on so that it may not see its own naked body: my religion sees nothing evil in a child's body.

On the day following this incident the *South African Sunday Express* published the following:—

In a statement which was handed to the Press and signed by fourteen ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church of the Free State,

these ministers express their disapproval and launch a stern criticism against the teachings of Mr. Neill. They strongly protest against the sentiments expressed by Mr. Neill, viz., his naked atheism, epitomised by his statement "God is but a person like myself," his mockery of Christ, "The cleansing of the Temple with a whip was an aberration of Christ," his superficial opinion of sin, "Christ's love was so great that he could not believe in sin," "No child is born bad," "There is no inherited sin."

The ministers go on to deprecate his condemnation of all knowledge except his own.

"Away with all schools but mine"; his degeneracy of all children by allowing them to smoke, swear, and even steal; his barbaric conception of marriage, "The emotions of love cannot be controlled"; "Children should not know a father."

It is further stated in the ministers' letter that Mr. Neill is simply seeking publicity, and wishes to cause a sensation, like his great master, G. B. Shaw.

That last paragraph is the most unkindest cut of all. Poor G. B. S!

I shall analyse this letter, not so much as a defence measure as to show how spite and hate will make men pervert an opponent's opinions. I never said God was a person like myself: what I said was that to me God was the deep

Unconscious in man, the good life force that was perverted by the moralists. I never mocked Christ. When I asked an audience if it could even imagine Jesus beating a child, someone asked me what I made of his scourging the money-lenders in the Temple. I replied that the incident made Jesus human and therefore more lovable.

The rest of the attack isn't worth replying to, but I must comment on that priceless sentence: "Children should not know a father." It arose from a written question handed up by a woman: "Should I tell my children who their father is?" I answered: "Yes, if you know." The house roared with laughter. Or maybe the Calvinists had heard a report of a remark I made to a Women's Club in Johannesburg. I was speaking of the home, and said that the woman was the most important factor in a child's life. "The father," I said, "isn't of much importance. Among animals he is of no importance: a calf or a kitten never knows its own father. That applies to some humans too (laughter)." Moral: never try to be funny when there are Calvinists around.

*By showing that you are on the side of a young thief does he not interpret this as indicating your approval*

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*of stealing as a pastime? What causes him to dis-  
continue a pastime which to him has your approval?*

The question shows that the asker does not think in terms of the Unconscious. A child symbolically steals love, and if reproved or punished he realises that he is being given hate. If I reward a thief for stealing I make him feel that I am on his side, that I approve of him, that I love him. When he has my love (and remember that I am a father substitute) he does not need to steal love in the symbolic form of money or fountain pens. If parents were on the side of their children there would be no young thieves.

*What is your attitude to Fairy Stories and Father Christmas?*

Children should not be deprived of fairy tales. Fairy tales are, according to Jung, the dreams of the race. Each has its own vital symbolism. The Oedipus Complex is seen in tales of little boys who slay giants, and the Masturbation Phantasy is clear in the tale of Aladdin who rubbed his wonderful lamp in order to gain all the pleasures of life. Even the Cinderella story is without danger. True it is an immoral yarn . . . be like Cinderella, a person of no special merit, and at last the fairy

godmother will make you a princess. It is, after all, the story of us all when we buy a ticket for the Irish Sweep; we all want something for nothing. In the end the phantasy does us no harm, for we never throw up our jobs on the off-chance of winning a Sweep. Children love fairy tales and that is enough to sanction them.

As for Santa Claus, I don't think we need bother about him. Children soon learn the truth about him. But there is a queer connection between him and the stork story, and the parents who want their children to believe in Santa Claus are usually those who tell their children lies about birth. Personally I never tell children about Santa Claus: I guess our four year olds would laugh me to scorn.

*Have you ever had any failures at your school?*

Oh, yes. One or two girls from convents came too late, and could not realise what freedom meant. A few boys from public schools who also came too late. Some children turned out to be pathological and had to be sent elsewhere. One boy will possibly be a failure in life because his parents gave him a fear of the supposed evils of masturbation. He could not work because his whole interest was the morbid one —Am I going to hell? I tried in vain to get his

parents to take off the masturbation verbot. They wouldn't, and the boy will possibly go through life unable to settle down to anything.

One bright boy could not get over his anti-social stage. We sent him to live with the cowboys of Texas and then with the Red Indians. He lived out his primitive interests there, and returned to Summerhill a fine lad.

There is always a good possibility of failure when the parents are against the school. It sounds incredible that such parents send their children to Summerhill, but sometimes they do because other schools have failed, and they select Summerhill in desperation. That is partly why we gave up taking young crooks who had been expelled from the Public Schools. Their parents usually had no belief in freedom . . . if they had their children wouldn't have been crooks.

*Do children ever attend church on their own?*

No. New pupils may go to church to begin with, but after about three Sundays they cease going. No one comments on their going to church, and nothing is ever said against church-going. (I expect a child soon senses that Summerhill believes in original virtue, while the churches believe in original sin.)

*What do you do with a child who answers back?*

The question was apparently asked by a class teacher. No child ever answers back, because you only answer back when you are treated as an inferior by someone who is dignified. In Summerhill we speak the language of the children, and if a teacher complained of being answered back I should know that he or she was a dud.

*Are the children interested in politics?*

No. That may be because they are middle-class children who have never had direct experience of poverty. I make it a rule to keep the staff from trying to influence the children politically, for I believe that politics, like religion, are a matter for personal choice later on in life.

*How does a child react to home after being at school; I mean during the holidays?*

That depends on the home. Some of the homes are like the school; the children are not suppressed, and they go home and return to school with pleasure. But in the main they prefer school because their playmates are there, and a holiday in a London flat is rather dreary. Consequently some pupils return to school before the holidays end. This is occasionally a matter for jealousy on the part of the parents.

Other children have suppression at home, and we can always tell what the home is like when they return to us after a long holiday. I have taken the children by train to London at the end of the term and had a quiet journey. I have brought them back to school at the beginning of the term and had a wretched journey, for the suppressed ones let off steam and made themselves a damned nuisance.

*Is not swearing taking God's name in vain?*

This was a Free State question. Children's swearing isn't. It deals with sex and natural functions. It is difficult to argue with a religious person who makes God a sacred personage and accepts the Bible as a literal history of holiness. If God were represented as a being of love and not one of fear no one would think of taking his name in vain. People exclaim: O Christ! because Christ has been misrepresented. I should call Khristnamurti a Christ like personality, but no one ever thinks of exclaiming: O Khristnamurti! The cure for blasphemy is to make our gods loving and human.

*How does the Summerhill government insist on fines? Suppose a child refuses to pay the fine?*

Children never do. I expect they would refuse if they felt they had been treated

unjustly. Our appeal system overcomes any fear of injustice.

*Is the Press right in quoting you as saying marriage is a terrible thing?*

Yes, but the Press notice was out of context. Speaking of marriage to a Women's Club in Johannesburg I said something like this: Marriage is a terrible thing when parents disagree with each other, for the children are reared in an atmosphere of hate, and they will carry this atmosphere with them through life. Marriage is of dual nature. It is founded on sex love, but one cannot live on sex love, and the unhappy marriage is one in which sex love has died, and differences of temperament and taste make companionship impossible. Such parents often imagine that the children are not conscious of the parental differences. They may not be conscious of them but they are unconscious of them. That is they do not *know* that something is wrong in the home, but they *feel* that something is wrong.

It was at this Women's Club meeting that I made a remark that has set the Calvinists of South Africa by the ears. I was talking of the relative importance of father and mother in the child's life, and I said: "It has often puzzled me why God isn't a woman. Woman is the

love-giver, the creator. Saintly men are always strongly feminine in their nature, but man has made God in his own image . . . a stern tyrant." In England my remark would have been received calmly, but in a land whose God is the Old Testament God I understand why the remark is considered base heresy. But so far as I can see the young South Africans are breaking away from the religion of hate. It is interesting, if tragic, that my insistence on the love that Jesus gave has roused the Calvinists against me. I have just read a Life of Calvin and I begin to understand how full of hate his life was.

*You told of a row you made when some children pulled up your potato plants? Why didn't you reward them by giving them the whole field of potatoes?*

If I reward a boy for stealing I am dealing with a love-starved youth, who must be treated psychologically. But when a few normal children raid my potato patch it is a social problem of give and take. I stand up for my rights socially as a matter of course, and as there is no fear of me as a headmaster I can charge a group at a general meeting just as any child can charge a group. And as I am not a perfect person and do not want to be, I have a human reaction

when the labour of hours is negated by the boyishness of campers-out. I have the same right to be protected by law and order as the child has, and I use this right when it is a matter of group action. If I were to make every law breakage a matter of individual psychology social life would be impossible, and the children would throw up self-government in disgust.

*Do you believe in home lessons?*

I don't even believe in school lessons unless they are chosen voluntarily. The home lesson habit is disgraceful. Children loathe home lessons, and that is enough to condemn them.

*Do you believe in corporal punishment?*

This question came after I had spoken for over an hour on child psychology. It reminds me of the lady who was being shown over the engine-room of a ship. "I understand it all clearly," she said, "but there is only one thing that puzzles me . . . what is the use of the boiler?"

But perhaps the question should be answered. Corporal punishment is evil because it is cruel and hateful. It makes the giver and the recipient hate. It is an unconscious sexual perversion. In communities where masturbation is sup-

pressed the punishment is given on the hand—the means of masturbation. In segregated boys' schools where homosexuality is suppressed the caning is given on the bottom—the object of desire. The religious hate of the "vile flesh" makes corporal punishment popular in narrowly religious regions.

Corporal punishment is always a projected act. The giver hates himself and projects his hate on to the child. The mother who spanks her child hates herself, and in consequence hates her child. In the case of a teacher with a large class the use of the strap is not so much a matter of hate as one of convenience. It is the easy way, and the best way to abolish it would be to abolish large classes. If a school were a play-place with freedom to learn or not learn strapping and caning would automatically die out. Many schools do not use corporal punishment, but they are schools in which the teachers know their job.

*Why do some boys only learn when they feel physical pain?*

I expect that I could learn to recite the Koran if I knew that I'd be flogged if I didn't. One result of course would be that I should hate the Koran and the flogger and myself. The only

thing that a flogged boy learns is that the cane is painful. I don't know what sort of a person asked the question. It may have been a South Africa magistrate, for caning of small children for "crimes" like playing marbles on the street seems to be fashionable in the Union. One doctor told me of supervising the caning of sixty small native children. He said that the second cut drew blood. Such a custom is unspeakable, but so long as we tolerate caning in the school we cannot say much about the barbarities of magistrates. Anyway, since learning is of no moment, why cane at all? We can only discuss corporal punishment as a branch of sexual perversion.

*How can one keep a child of fifteen months away from a stove in a living-room?*

Put up a fire guard. But allow the child to learn the truth about stoves by getting its fingers burnt ever so slightly.

*How should children get their first ideas about God?*

Who is God? I don't know. God to me means the good in each one of us. If you try to teach a child about a being about whom you are vague yourself you will do more harm than good.

*When you are on the child's side isn't that your way of getting possession?*

I don't know. What if it is? If it helps the child, what does it matter what my motive is?

*If two children, brother and sister, five and seven years old, continually squabble, what method would you adopt to get them to stop? They are very fond of each other.*

Are they? Is one getting more love from mother than the other? Are they imitating father and mother? Have they been given guilty consciences about their bodies? Are they punished? If the answer is no to all these questions then the squabbling is the normal desire to exercise power. They should be with other children who have no emotional attachment to them. (It is better to send a child to a bad school than to educate it at home.) A child must measure itself against other children. It cannot measure itself against its own brothers and sisters because all sorts of emotional factors enter into the relationship—jealousies, favouritism, etc.

*Why do children masturbate and how should we stop them?*

We must distinguish between infantile masturbation and adult masturbation. Infantile

masturbation is really not masturbation at all. It begins with curiosity. The infant discovers its hands and nose and toes, and mother crows with delight. But when it discovers its sexual apparatus mother hastily takes the hand away. The main effect is to make the sexual organs the most interesting parts of the body. The infant's erotic zone is the mouth, and when small children have had no moral verbots about masturbation they have very little interest in their sexual organs. If a small child is a masturbator the cure is to approve of the habit, for then the child has no morbid compulsion to indulge.

With older children who have reached puberty approval will lessen the habit. But remember that sex must find some outlet, and because marriage is always late owing to the fact that the young cannot marry until they can afford to set up a house, the sexually ripe are faced with two alternatives—masturbation and clandestine sexual intercourse. The moralists condemn both, but they will not offer a substitute. Oh, yes, of course, they advocate chastity, which means the crucifixion of the flesh. But since only a few monastics can apparently crucify the flesh definitely, the rest of us cannot get away from affording sex an outlet. Until marriage is made independent of the

financial element the masturbation problem will continue to be a big one. Our films and novels rouse sex in the young, and as D. H. Lawrence pointed out lead to masturbation because proper sex is denied to youth. The fact that everyone has masturbated doesn't help much. The Companionate Marriage seems about the only way out. But so long as sex is attached to sin this is not a likely social solution.

But to return to the question: tell the child that there is nothing sinful about it, and if you have already told him lies about its alleged consequences—disease, madness, etc., be brave enough to tell him you were a liar. Then and only then will masturbation become something of less importance to him.

*My little girl is most curious about the death of her parents and her ultimate place in an orphanage. How does one cure that curiosity?*

Her curiosity covers her wish to get rid of her dear parents. Why I don't know, but I make the guess that they are not all that she thinks they should be. It is probable that it is the mother she really wants to get rid of. The dear old Electra Complex again. But in such a case nothing of moment can be said, because we don't know the home situation.

*Does correct home treatment counteract the wrong teachings of the school?*

In the main, yes. Home's voice is more powerful than the voice of the school, and if the home is free from fear and punishment the child will not come to believe that the school is right. Parents should tell their children what they think of a wrong school. Too often parents have an absurd sense of loyalty to even the most stupid of schoolmasters. If more parents protested against punishment the schools would have to stop and think about their out-of-date methods.

*Do you honestly think it is right to allow a boy, naturally lazy, to go his own easy way doing as he chooses, wasting time? How do you set him to work when work is distasteful to him?*

Laziness doesn't exist. The lazy boy is either physically ill or he has no interest in the things that adults think he ought to do. I have never seen a Summerhill child who came before the age of twelve who was lazy. I have had many a "lazy" lad sent from a desk school. Such a lad remains "lazy" for quite a long time, that is until he recovers from his education. I do not set him to work that is distasteful to him, because he isn't ready for it. Like you and me he will have many a thing to do that he hates

doing, but if he is left free to live through his play period he will face any difficulty later. No ex-Summerhillian has been accused of laziness.

*Do you believe in the Bible?*

That's a wide question. If I say I do I am a liar, for I think that Solomon's proverb about the rod and the child is a piece of foolish barbarity. Or do I believe the tale of Jonah and the whale? Or that the world was created about 6,000 odd years ago? Only a mentally deficient person could believe all the Bible. Of course one can adopt the Calvinist view that the book is Holy Writ and beyond all criticism. To such a person there is nothing to be said. But . . . Do you believe in the Bible? I cannot answer so large a question. What I do believe is that Christ was the greatest man of love I have read about, just as I believe that Paul was at bottom a hater. The queer thing is that so many "believers" use hate in their schools. No, I believe in the child, and the only Bible that any teacher should study is the good nature of the young child.

*How can I stop my child from sucking its thumb?*

Don't try. If you succeed you'll probably drive the child back to a pre-sucking ~~habit~~.

What does it matter? Lots of efficient folk have sucked their thumbs. Thumb-sucking shows that the mother's breast interest has not been lived out, but as you cannot give a child of eight the breast, all you can do is to see that the child has as much creative interest as possible. But that does not always cure. I have had creative pupils who sucked their thumbs up to the age of puberty. Leave it alone.

*What should a teacher do when a boy plays with his pencil when she is trying to teach a lesson?*

Pencil = Penis. The boy has been forbidden to play with his penis. Cure: get the parents to take off the masturbation verbot.

*Does heredity play any part in the life of a child?*

We know little about heredity. I pay little attention to it because you can't do anything about it. If a boy is a thief because his father was a minister or a headmaster you can't do anything about it. Hence I put my money on environment. I am certain that there is not such a thing as hereditary lying or thieving: what is called heredity is very often imitation.

*Why does my small son tell so many lies?*

Imitation of the parents possibly.

*If a child is given absolute freedom, how soon will it realise that self discipline is an essential of living, or will it ever realise that?*

There isn't such a thing as absolute freedom, and anyone who allows a child to get all its own way is a dangerous person. Social freedom no one can have, for the rights of others must be respected. Individual freedom everyone should have. Put it concretely: no one has the right to make a boy learn Latin, because learning is a matter for individual choice, but if in a Latin class a boy insists on fooling all the time the class should throw him out, because he is interfering with the freedom of others.

As for self-discipline, that is an indefinite thing. Too often it means a discipline of self that has been instilled by the moral ideas of adults. True self-discipline is one that considers the rights and happiness of others.

*Can a child be spoilt through too much love?*

No, not if it is creative love. The spoiled child is one who receives too much possessive love . . . very often in the form of possessions—luxurious toys and too much money. But then parents often compensate for their lack of love by showering gifts on their children. I find that the most unloved children get the most expensive presents.

*Why do you object to being called a disciple of George Bernard Shaw?*

(The fourteen Dutch Reformed Church ministers who attacked me in the Free State Press had accused me of trying to copy my "master, G. B. Shaw" and I had humorously protested in a lecture.)

I am not a disciple of Shaw. I enjoy his plays . . . *How He Lied to Her Husband* is a gem, and may be the only play of his that will live. But my job is child psychology, and Shaw is not a child psychologist. He is an intellectual: I am not. He thinks too much for me. He is so heady. Much rather would I follow Barrie, who is too hearty. But why be a disciple of anyone? I was a disciple of Homer Lane, a man who was a genius in child psychology, but although Lane showed me the way I had to learn by practical experience. Indeed I think I began to do creative work after Lane's death. Before that I had the feeling that he, the master, was always there in the background, ready to give advice. We have all been disciples of someone, but if we remain only disciples we do not get very far. Every man should pray that he has no disciples. Most of Freud's disciples are dull, plodding people. D. H. Lawrence's disciples are squabbling among themselves, for

each one thinks that he or she alone knows the truth about the master. And when we see what the disciples of Jesus have made of His message we must realise that discipleship is very very dangerous.

*Why do you have your boys and girls sleeping in separate rooms?*

Well, Summerhill is a school, not a brothel. And here let me give another question from Johannesburg: *What do you do to prevent the young girls leaving your school from becoming prostitutes? With no moral or religious restraint they will certainly prefer a few daily hours of "love" to the toil behind a typewriter or in a factory. It certainly seems the easier way to the happiness which you regard as all important.*

This is obviously a subjective question. I mean that the person asking it was expressing an attitude arising from a personal sexual conflict. It may have come from someone who felt that he or she was prostituting his or her talents. A journalist who was prostituting himself to a Press that was opposite to his convictions might have asked the question. Or a wife who had ceased to love her husband, and felt that giving her body without love was prostitution . . . as it is in such a case. Or, again, a woman

who was retaining her chastity through the restraint of religious or moral taboos, may have asked it. As it was a written question I have no means of knowing. Still, because there are many sexually repressed people who might ask such a question it should be answered.

Prostitution is more of an economic question than a psychological one. In a capitalist civilisation where exploitation compels girls to slave for inadequate wages, selling the body is one way of avoiding poverty. I used to think that the psychological was the more important feature, that the nymphomaniac type of girl would be a prostitute under any system. I was proved wrong by that interesting book *Soviet Russia Fights Neurosis*, by Dr. Frankwood Williams. He writes: "At the time of the Revolution there were said to be 25,000 registered prostitutes in Moscow. Immediately after the Revolution prostitution was made illegal by decree and prostitutes were no longer registered. . . . It is now believed that there are not more than 400 to 500."

To return to the question. It implies that a prostitute finds happiness in her profession. Obviously the asker has never met a prostitute. If he or she had, he or she would have learned that of all poor souls a prostitute is the most

miserable. She has no future, a few years and then tuberculosis or venereal disease. Her trade dies with the passing of her sex appeal. Only a girl with a limited imagination could possibly become a prostitute.

When I get home to Summerhill I know that the question will be received with hearty laughter by the girls. They will be too broadminded to be insulted.

Yes, they will laugh.

### *What is the effect of self-hate?*

In a child self-hate is shown by anti-social behaviour, quarrelling, spitefulness, bad temper, destructiveness. All self-hate tends to be projected, that is transferred to others. The mother of an illegitimate child will condemn sexual looseness in others. The teacher who has tried for years to conquer masturbation will cane children. The old maid who has "sublimated" her sex, that is repressed it, will show her self-hate in scandal-mongering and bitterness. All hate is self-hate. The persecution of Jews is done by people who hate the Jew in themselves. You see this in coloured communities. The Cape Coloured, like the Eurasian, is much more intolerant to the true native than the white is. So in Jew baiting we should always

suspect some trace of Jewish blood in the baiter. It is not always so, literally, of course; the hatred of the Jew may have a root that isn't racial, but that root is always one of self-hatred. I have the feeling that anti-semitism has something to do with the repression of masturbation.

*Why does my child of two always destroy toys?*

Most probably because it is a wise child. Toys are usually completely uncreative. The destruction has the aim of finding out what is inside. But then I do not know the circumstances of this case. If the child is being made into a self-hater by spankings and lectures he will naturally destroy anything that comes in his way.

*Do your older children look after the smaller?*

No. They don't need to be looked after. They are too busy on their own important affairs.

*What do Summerhill children think of the cinema?*

They see all kinds of films. We have no censorship. The result is that by the time they leave school they have acquired a good judgment of films. Quite often an older child will stay away on the ground that the film doesn't sound good enough. The older ones who have

seen the great films of Russia and Germany and Austria are very critical of the average Hollywood production. One curious feature is that most of the children prefer Eddie Cantor to Charlie Chaplin. It shows that the taste of one generation is not that of the following one.

Boys under puberty are bored by love films. To them Greta Garbo is nobody.

*Why should a boy of sixteen be self-conscious in the presence of his friends and avoid their company?*

Most likely a guilt about masturbation. He may fear that the others will see by his face that he indulges. Many children have this idea, needless to say an erroneous one. I have studied children for many years and I cannot tell by a child's face whether he masturbates or not.

*Does every child go through a stage of homosexuality?*

Yes, but the homosexuality is unconscious. Up to puberty and even a little beyond it children of both sexes are primarily interested in their own sex. Because we are all bisexual we are all more or less homosexual. Friendship is conditioned by a natural unconscious homosexuality. No man is 100% man; no woman 100% woman. I have seen men who were 90% woman, women who were 90% men. Some

people are fifty-fifty. What conditions homosexuality no one knows. It may be physical primarily, but then I believe that the psychical controls the physical. The fact that I have never seen real conscious homosexuality in my co-educational school seems to suggest that environment can prevent homosexuality. In segregated schools sex must find an outlet, and the only outlet is an auto-erotic one or a homosexual one. In Summerhill no boy ever has a "pash" on a master: no girl on a mistress. Co-education is the only possible education.

*If I criticise my little daughter about trifles you say I hate her, but I really don't, you know.*

But you must hate yourself. You may have missed the bus. You may have sacrificed your "career" for marriage, and your child may stand as a symbol of your bondage. Trifles always represent symbols of big things. If you criticise for trifles you are an unhappy woman. I suggest you get a job that will take up the interest that keeping a house apparently does not satisfy.

*Can an ordinary teacher do psychoanalysis?*

I'm afraid not. He should first of all be analysed, for if his own unconscious is an un-

known territory he won't get far in exploring the unknown land of a child's soul.

*Should one ever be sarcastic with children? Do you think this would help to develop a sense of humour in a child?*

No. Sarcasm and humour have no connection with each other. Humour is an affair of love, sarcasm of hate. To be sarcastic with a child is to make the child feel inferior and degraded. Only a cheap and nasty teacher will ever be sarcastic.

*How would you treat a cowardly child?*

But what is a cowardly child? We are all cowardly either morally or physically. I have quite a lot of moral courage, but when the other day I made my first flight in a private aeroplane I was scared stiff . . . until I got off the ground. Any child in Summerhill would go up in a plane eagerly without any fear, but many of them would fear to wear tartan trousers on the street.

We can do nothing to make a cowardly boy brave. All we can do is to see to it that we don't make him a coward by introducing artificial fear into his life. Every time a mother cries: "Don't go near the edge, darling!" she

is making her child afraid of life. This is especially true in corrections for sex interests. If a small child is punished for a sexual offence that child will have a cowardly attitude not only to sex but to life in general. We make children cowards by lying to them, lying not only about the effects of masturbation, lying to them about the policeman coming, or telling father. . . . I have pointed out more than once that the mother's "Wait till your Daddy comes home and you'll catch it!" is the mother's method of forcing father to get the child's hate. And our school methods make cowards, for inaction, obedience, fear—these all inhibit and cause timidity. Dr. Wilhelm Reich argues that capitalism uses sex repression in order to emasculate the proletariat and make it servile to its masters. Capitalist morality knows what it is doing.

But, coming back to the child, it must be admitted that psychology does not know enough to explain why a boy is cowardly while his brother is brave. All we know is that you can't make a person brave by teaching him to be brave. You can make him overcome his cowardice by teaching him to be afraid of cowardice, but that does not touch fundamentals. After all, it takes a terrible lot of bravery to run away from a battle.

*Have you Boy Scouts in Summerhill?*

No. I don't think our boys would stomach the one good deed per day. To do a good deed consciously savours of priggishness. There is much that is good in the Boy Scout movement. To me it is marred by its moral uplift, its Public School ideas of right and wrong and purity . . . especially purity. Also it is a true son of capitalism. King and Country, but we all know that these words are used symbolically for Capital and Privilege.

*Every true blue Boy Scout troop would fight for the powers that be in the State. The movement is no more patriotic than—say—a Communist Scout movement would be. It was founded by a soldier who believed in imperialism, and personally I have no liking for any movement that would defend an entrenched class against its exploited slaves. I have never expressed any opinion about the Boy Scouts in my school. I have never heard a boy evince any interest in the movement.*

*What do you do with a child who won't eat?*

I don't know. We have never had one. If we had I should at once suspect a defiant attitude to its parents. We have had one or two who were sent to us because they wouldn't eat,

but we never saw any symptoms of fasting in the school. In a difficult case I should consider the possibility of the child's having remained emotionally at the breast stage, and would try a feeding bottle with milk. I should also suspect that the parents had been faddy about food, giving the child food that it did not want.

*Do you approve of gifts to show one's love?*

No. Love doesn't need outward tokens. But children should have gifts at the usual times—birthdays, Christmas and so on. Only no gratitude should be looked for or demanded.

*What can be done to cure untidiness?*

But why cure it? Most creative people are untidy. It is usually a dull man whose room and desk are models of neatness. I find that children up to nine are in the main tidy; between nine and fifteen they are untidy. They simply do not see untidiness. Later on they become as tidy as need be.

*You say that the children in Summerhill have clean minds. What do you mean?*

A clean mind is one that cannot be shocked. To be shocked is to show that you have repressions that make you interested in what shocks

you. Victorian old women were shocked at the word "leg" because they had an abnormal interest in things leggy. Leggy things were sexual things, repressed things. So that in an atmosphere like Summerhill where there is no taboo about sex and no connecting of sex with sin, you find that children have no need to make sex unclean by whispering and leering. They are sincere about sex just as they are sincere about everything else.

*What would you do to a child who won't stick to anything? He is interested in music for a short period, then he changes to dancing, and so on.*

I'd do nothing. Such is life. In my time I have changed from photography to bookbinding, then to woodwork, then brasswork. Life is full of fragments of interests. I sketched in ink for many years, but about twenty years ago I realised that I was a tenth-rate artist, and I gave it up. A child is always eclectic in his tastes. He tries all things: that's how he learns. Our boys spend days making boats, but if an aviator happens to visit us a boy will leave a half-made boat and begin to make an aeroplane. We never suggest that a child should finish his work, because if his interest has gone it is wrong to force him to finish it.

*Our boy is twelve. He won't wash before coming to table. What should we do?*

Well, I am not the man to advise, for I seldom wash before coming to table myself, only when I have been in my workshop or gardening. But why do you attach so much importance to washing? Have you considered that washing may be a symbol to you? Are you sure that your concern about his being clean is not covering your fear that he is unclean morally? Don't worry about the boy; take my word for it that your dirt complex is a subjective personal one. If you feel unclean you will attach an exaggerated importance to cleanliness. One of my old friends in Scotland died at ninety without ever having had a bath in his life. But you ask what I should do. If you must have him appear at table clean, I mean if Aunt Mary sits at table with you and there is a prospect of her leaving her clean nephew a fortune, well the best way is to forbid him to wash.

*Should parents show any affection for each other in the presence of their children?*

Why not? Only they should never have children sleeping in the same room as themselves. Overhearing or over-seeing sexual intercourse gives a child terrors. The child does not

understand, and too often he thinks that father is hurting mother. I have seen some nasty phobias arising from the overhearing of intercourse.

*Now do you seriously believe that the corrective in breaking bad habits is to let children continue their vices?*

Vices? In whose opinion are they vices? Bad habits? You mean masturbation possibly. (By breaking a habit forcibly you do not cure it. The only cure for any habit is to outlive its interest.) Children who are allowed to masturbate indulge much less than children who have been forbidden to masturbate. Beating always prolongs trouser-messing. (Tying up the hands makes an infant a perverted masturbator for life!) (Bad habits are not bad habits at all. They are the results of parental ignorance and hate.) Summerhill children have no bad habits.

*My daughter of twelve likes to read smutty books? What shall I do about it?*

I should provide her with all the smutty books I could afford to buy. Then she would live out her interest. But why is she so interested in smut? Is she looking for the truth that you never gave her about sex? Something must have been lacking in her sexual education. My

girl pupils can read anything they like. I have Kraft-Ebing on my shelves, but they never want to read him.

*What about your children's manners? Do they eat peas with their knives?*

I haven't the least idea. I wouldn't notice if they did. Eating peas with a knife is a small matter of a breach of etiquette. My pupils have such good manners that if they saw one eat peas with his knife they would make no remark.

*Do you accept backward children?*

Sure, it all depends on what you mean by backward. Mentally defective children we do not take, but a child who is backward at school is a different story. (Many children are backward at school because the school is too dull for them.) Summerhill's criterion of backwardness has nothing to do with tests and sums and marks. (In many cases backwardness simply means that the child has an unconscious conflict and a guilty conscience.) How can he take an interest in arithmetic or history if his unconscious problem is: Am I wicked or not? I speak with personal feeling about this question of backwardness, for as a boy I simply couldn't learn. My pockets

were full of bits of scrap iron and brass, and when my eyes were on my text book my thoughts wandered to my gadgets. At this moment I have turned out my pockets in curiosity. The list is as follows:—pocket-knife with many blades, screwdriver, pliers, scissors, foot rule, a few nails and nuts and bolts . . . all this on a South African ship! It seems that we never change in essentials, for the list is the list I had when I was twelve, only of course fuller and of better quality. But mark that the list is one that can mean creative work. I have seldom seen a backward boy or girl who had not the potentialities of creative work, and to judge any child by his or her progress in school subjects is futile and fatal.) After all many of the boys who win prizes at school become railway porters. (The others become professors—possibly of all men the least creative. Teaching is one of the most uncreative of jobs.)

*Do any of your pupils join the army later?*

So far only one has joined the army—the R.A.F. It is possible that the army is too uncreative to attract free children. Fighting is, after all, destruction. Certainly in our imperialist system an army is necessary, just as a Russian army is a necessity in a capitalistic

world. Summerhill children would fight for their country just as readily as any other children, only they would probably want to know exactly for what they were fighting. At the moment (November, 1936) no one knows who our enemy is. Hitler is expected to attack Russia when he is ready, but the enquiring youth joining the army to-day would ask: What is the policy I have to fight for? Against Russia or against Germany or Italy or America? Am I to die for England or for imperialism? Am I to fight for the West End or the East End? If I give my life will you see to it that all other men give all their wealth? In short, am I to die for the possessors and exploiters? At the same time I grant that no State would tolerate the doubts and questions of its cannon fodder.

*You don't approve of Latin or Mathematics, but how then do you suggest a child's mind should be developed?*

I don't know what mind is. If the experts in Mathematics and Latin have great minds I have never been aware of it.

*What should I do with my child of six who draws obscene pictures?*

Encourage him of course, but at the same time clean your house, for any obscenity in the

home must come from you. A child of six has no obscenity. You see obscenity in his drawings because you have an obscene attitude to life. I can only imagine that the obscene drawings deal with chamber pots and sexual organs. Treat these things naturally without any idea of right and wrong and your child will pass through this interest just as he will pass through other interests. I wish you would send that child to my school. He sounds original and lovable.

*Does your obvious disapproval of Mathematics influence your children not to do it?*

I never speak to children about Mathematics. I like Mathematics so much that I often do geometrical and algebraical problems for fun. My case against Mathematics is that they are too abstract for children, and further that nearly every child hates Mathematics. No boy can understand  $x$  apples, but every boy understands two apples. And I make the same point against Mathematics that I make against Latin or Greek, namely that the child ploughs through seas of technical preparations, and has to stop before he reaches the stage when he might find some delight in the subject. And what is the use of teaching quadratic equations to boys who are to mend cars or sell stockings? It is madness.

*Which is better for a child, living at home and going to a day school or living in a boarding school?*

Since I make my living out of a boarding school my answer will be prejudiced. Much depends on what kind of a school you mean, what kind of a home. I find that when the home is good, Summerhill children go home happily and return to school happily. In the main perhaps the boarding school is better. Too much family life often leads to getting on each other's nerves, and we must consider an important factor, namely that a child at a day school does not get its full amount of mixing with other children. It is best for children to play with children who are not emotionally related to them. Again, the boarding school is made for children, but the home is primarily adapted for adults. I can live amidst noise because it is my job, but when father returns from the office he does not, as a rule, have a tolerant attitude to noise. Let us put it this way: a bad school is worse than a good home and vice versa.

*Who should give sex instruction—teachers or parents?*

Parents of course.

*You are opposed to “don’ts” for children. Would you stop a boy shooting birds or would you encourage him?*

I used to shoot birds as a boy. I shot my last bird when I was twenty. The question is a difficult one. It suggests so many similarities. Would we eat flesh if we had to kill the animals we eat? I certainly shouldn't. Do we condemn the colonel who slaughters hundreds of pheasants and grouse? Do we say anything when Rat Week kills off many rats by giving them poison that burns their guts out agonisingly? Do we kill flies and wasps? I am trying to show that there may be some humbuggery in our condemnation of the boy who shoots birds. I shouldn't encourage him, but on the other hand I would not forbid him to shoot. Naturally I would try to discover if the birds represented anything symbolical to him. I recall curing one boy by showing him that his shooting was his method of disapproving of his penis . . . as an infant he had been made to call it his "bird," quite a common name for it, by the way.

*There seems to have been a tacit implication in the speaker's attack on the theory of original sin, that hate is something foreign to human nature. Is hate not part of our instinctive make-up? Can't we admit hate without repressing it, and direct it to such things as exploitation?*

The end of the question suggests an amiable cynic. Freud holds that hate comes first, that

love is a later development. I cannot follow the argument. I have never seen any signs of hate in a new-born infant. My belief in original virtue arises from my observation of children who hate. When they are loved they drop their hate. It is true that small children bicker with each other in their endeavours to find power. But the bickering is only a serious affair when the children are being made to hate themselves by being moralised to by adults. The bickering is not hate. (Hate is love transformed, rather it is thwarted love.) (It is not the opposite of love, for the opposite of love is obviously indifference.) Thus small children are much more likely to quarrel with their brothers and sisters than with outside children, for in the home there is an emotional atmosphere which is allied to love. (Hate in a child arises when he finds that he is not getting enough love from his parents) I have seen many a young hater come to Summerhill biting and scratching, but in six months our haters become social lovable characters. (I am forced to conclude that hate is not a clear instinct; it must be acquired.) (How it comes to be acquired is the big mystery of life.) If the child is born good why then do we have warmakers and kill-joys and Calvinistic haters of the body? What makes the adult man treat his

fellows with cruelty? Why does a respectable magistrate order boys to be flogged? (One answer is that adult man prefers possession to creation, and his love for possession makes him formulate cruel laws to protect that possession.) But this is only a side-tracking of the question, for one naturally asks: But what makes him seek possession instead of creation? (Why does the Fall of Man take place?) (For obviously man does fall from the creation of childhood to the possession of adulthood. It is the most mysterious question in life.) I thought of it recently when they took me down a gold mine on the Rand. It struck me then that humanity must be mad: it spends time and money and life in digging out yellow metal from the bowels of the earth, only to bury that metal in the vaults of the banks.) In the Rand uncountable whites and natives have died of tuberculosis and silicosis, all for gold. One headmaster in the Rand told me that more than half his white pupils were fatherless, owing to the tuberculosis of the mines. (Millions have died in wars that were made in order to steal gold, and millions will yet die in wars of conquest.) (Life is so precious that millions are sacrificed for the possessiveness of the minority.) The exploited workers of England and the exploited natives of Africa are

sacrificed for possession and its concomitant power.

It may be that because man has the unfortunate capacity to form ideals that he is a failure. No man can live up to an ideal, and the inevitable sense of failure engenders self hate. (We all seek happiness. Life is short and behind our life is the fear of death.) This fear is seldom conscious unless religion has made the fear a terror. When flying the other day I don't think I was afraid of death: I was afraid of leaving life, for there is so much that I want to do: as H. G. Wells said the other day: I don't want to put away my toys and go to bed. But that may be a rationalisation. (We all want to live as fully and happily as we can, but why happiness is associated with possession I do not know. A Rolls Royce would not increase my happiness, so that the mere possession is not enough. (It is the power that possession affords that we seek after.) It is the kudos that possession gives that we seek. (Riches impress our neighbours. To be poor is to be nobody.) I am at present on a South African liner, travelling second class. I went out first class and I notice a few differences. Not only is the food poorer in the second class, or shall I say the choice is poorer. One feels that one is of little import-

and second class or tourist. There are only twenty-four passengers in the first class. I long to have some way of getting good exercise, but the only exercise on my deck is walking. The twenty-four have a gym. with a rowing machine. It cannot be much used, yet my request to go to the gym. and use it daily has been refused. It is of course the usual law: in life you only get what you have paid for.

I know that I am not answering this important question. I am merely fringing it, trying with little success to find a clue to the riddle of man's possessive hate. (It is true that hate increases with the amount of possession.) (It is true that the greatest love for humanity is found in possessionless men like Jesus and Khrishnamurti.) Then why have we one or two Christs and a few millions of Barabbases? Why do we as a multitude always choose Barabbas? I think we may have a clue in fear. Man fears life and he fears death.) Possession is an antidote to fear, not only fear of poverty, which may be physical death or at least social death, fear of losing an anchorage.) (From the moment that we leave the safe anchorage of the womb we are seeking safety.) Our riches are our anchor, and when we have no riches we project our anchorage to the skies and sing hymns about our safety on

the bosom of Abraham. (Heaven is wealth stored up for the future, that is, it is mother's womb.) We hate those who may lift our anchor. The Calvinists of South Africa rose against me because I was a danger to their anchor of original sin and joylessness. (The hate of capitalists for Communism is at bottom a fear of being dispossessed, robbed of safety first.) (Yes, it is fear that is at the root of possessive hate, fear that is born of ignorance.) (And humanity is so very ignorant. We don't know the secret of life.) We don't know the mystery of the universe; we have no idea of what is beyond the grave.) (With all our so-called learning we are fundamentally at the stage of the savage whose fear made him invent a religion of fear.) (It is our unconscious feeling of inadequacy that gives us fear.) (We are born brave and life makes us cowards.)

Now I begin to realise why there is so little hate in Summerhill. We have almost abolished fear. (I am convinced that if a new generation of parents and teachers will give children freedom from outside fears, hate will gradually disappear from the world.)